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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language is not only a matter of academic interest, but also a matter of practical importance. The study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and to identify the factors that have influenced its development. This understanding can be useful in a number of ways, including in the field of linguistics, in the field of literature, and in the field of education.

The second part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language in the field of linguistics. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and to identify the factors that have influenced its development. This understanding can be useful in a number of ways, including in the field of linguistics, in the field of literature, and in the field of education.

The third part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the English language in the field of literature. It is argued that the study of the history of the English language can help us to understand the development of the English language and to identify the factors that have influenced its development. This understanding can be useful in a number of ways, including in the field of linguistics, in the field of literature, and in the field of education.

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SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

ON

The Divine Revelations.



BY THE

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TO THE
REV. W. H. HUTCHINGS, M.A.,
SUBWARDEN OF THE HOUSE OF MERCY, CLEWER,
MY FRIEND AND FELLOW-LABOURER,
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME,
AS A TOKEN OF AFFECTIONATE GRATITUDE
FOR CONSTANT INVALUABLE AID,
SPECIALLY EXPERIENCED IN TIMES OF NEED.

PREFACE.

THESE Instructions, like those published in a previous volume on the Holy Eucharist, were delivered in the Chapel of the House of Mercy, Clewer, to the Sisters of S. John the Baptist, and from notes taken down at the time they have been recast and expanded in the hope that they may be found useful in a wider sphere.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE DIVINE REVELATIONS VIEWED GENERALLY . . .	1
II. THE PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE	19
III. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CREATION	39
IV. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN COVENANT	55
V. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE MOSAIC LAW . . .	75
VI. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN PROPHECY	98
VII. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE INCARNATION . .	116
VIII. THE REVELATION OF GOD THE SON IN HIS PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION	137
IX. THE REVELATION OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT . . .	154
X. THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE BEATIFIC VISION .	174
XI. THE EFFECTS OF THE DIVINE REVELATIONS . . .	192

THE DIVINE REVELATIONS.

I.

THE DIVINE REVELATIONS VIEWED GENERALLY. •

4 **THERE** has been a Divine order determining the series of Revelations in which it has pleased Almighty God to make Himself known to mankind. This order may be clearly traced, and also the connection which exists between the successive Revelations and their influence on the progress of Humanity. And we cannot doubt but that it is in accordance with the purposes of God that we should study His Revelations under these aspects—their mutual interdependence, and respective moral results.

Nor is the order in which the Revelations were originally given of interest only as they concern the general progress of humanity. There is an intimate relation between the successive Revelations of God to mankind and the progress of individual lives, for individuals are representatives of their race. In Holy Scripture the entire race is often viewed as an individual whole. S. Paul speaks of the time when we shall “all come in the unity of the faith, and in the

2 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

knowledge of the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST;¹ and, on the other hand, S. John, speaking of the individual member of the Body of CHRIST, says that "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him,"² as though there were no other soul but his in which GOD had made His abode. And it is commonly observed, how close a resemblance exists between the several stages of the life of collective humanity as a whole, and that of individuals, each successive period, in the one case as in the other, having its own limit and its own laws of progress.

If these principles are admitted, the view which I purpose to take of this high theme will not be considered mere speculation; but rather intensely practical, and suggestive of important results as to the true course of a Christian life. I propose to give first a brief sketch of the entire series of the Divine Revelations, connecting with them the corresponding signs of an advancing life; and afterwards to draw out more fully in detail the meaning and purposes of each successive Revelation, and the influence which it is intended to exert upon the soul.

I. The first Revelation of GOD was in Creation. He was then revealed as the Living or Lifegiving GOD. And this Revelation while involving as its consequence all succeeding Revelations, was nevertheless, if separately viewed, of all the simplest. For however infinitely manifold in its details, it presents us with the one idea of life. "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

² 1 S. John iv. 16.

Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."¹ Whether we understand the Mosaic description of the creation literally, as a series of creative acts taking place on successive days according to our ordinary reckoning of time, or suppose the term "day" to mean an indefinite period, and so prolonging the interval between the successive acts of creation; or, again, according to a view suggested of late years, regard the Mosaic description merely as a succession of symbolic pictures representing the one grand idea that all things were created by Almighty God, without implying anything as to the time or manner of their creation,—in any case the same conclusion holds good, that creation was an act of God alone, a distinctly and wholly divine interposition calling into existence the entire universe and all its infinite varieties of being. Whatever interpretation of the creative act we may adopt, the Revelation implies that all things visible and invisible, the celestial and terrestrial spheres, the laws of Providence, the causes and events which make up the order, the movement, and the destiny of the creatures, are all of God, so that we can neither see nor imagine anything as existing outside of God, or independent of Him, but only as being in God and because of God. Their origin and their preservation, their growth and their decay, their endless diversities and resemblances, their actings and reactings on each other, are alike in this—that they have no being of their own, no independent existence, but exist only as manifestations of His power, and expressions of His will, effects of His Life imparting life which, though not Himself, have their being only because and as He wills them to be.

¹ Gen. i. 2.

II. The second Revelation which succeeded after many ages was that of God in Covenant with man. Commencing with the call of Abraham, and after him of the Patriarchs, it advanced along the sacred line of election, to be continued onward till the consummation of all things; for the Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints are but the expansion and development of the one chosen race of the true Israel. This Revelation presents a new and advanced aspect of the Godhead. In creation the power and wisdom of God are manifested, but nothing, comparatively speaking, is revealed of His moral nature, or of His relation to man, save only that He is the author of his existence. But in this second Revelation God became known as one having a personal choice and personal affections; as loving and trusting, and desirous of being loved and trusted in return by the objects of His love. He thus exhibited Himself as one capable of affectionate and restful intercourse with man, as a Friend with His friend, entering into contracts and promises, binding Himself and permitting Himself to be bound, according to the will of others. The Name by which He was thenceforth called—"the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"—expressed, not only His interest in the concerns of each separate life, but also an intercommunion of interests, and a mutual dependence through the consentient wills of the two parties in the covenant. The very idea of a covenant involves the sense of mutual possession, each being bound to the other, the life of each committed to that of the other, as in a wedded union; and this mystery of love was brought into practical exercise between the uncreated and the created life, between the Creator

and the creature, so that every elect soul could truly say to its God, "I am Thine, and Thou art mine, in Time and in Eternity."

III. The third Revelation was in the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. It was a Revelation of the Holiness of God accompanied with the terrors of the Divine Justice; and every subsequent expression of the will of God bearing on the conduct of man is a farther unfolding of this same Revelation. Like the Revelation of God in covenant, it exhibits the moral character of the Godhead; but differs from it in this—that while the former is confined to exhibiting the personal dispositions and affections of God towards His creatures, this latter sets forth His attributes and government, and His claims on the obedience of His creatures. The one Revelation is the necessary complement of the other. For so great is the tenderness and love exhibited in the covenanted relation of God towards His elect, that it might have given occasion to an undue familiarity and a lack of that reverence which ought ever to characterise the creature in the Presence of his Creator. This possible evil tendency was counteracted by the farther Revelation of the awfulness of the Divine Holiness. The former Revelation displayed His wonderful affability, the latter His Majesty and His unerring Righteousness. The Revelation of God in the Law was an unveiling of the Divine Perfections with the intended practical result of constraining the will of man to a corresponding holiness, enforcing on his inner spirit the solemnity of a perpetual witness to all that is most pure and true in thought and deed.

IV. Afterwards followed the Revelation of God in Prophecy. "At sundry times and in divers manners

God spake in time past by His servants the prophets.”¹ This Revelation differs from all that preceded it specially in this—that it was clear only to those who were gifted with an inner spiritual sight akin to the prophetic spirit, and clear in them only in proportion to the degree in which they cultivated this gift. It followed the Revelation of the Law as a special blessing vouchsafed to those who were endeavouring to perfect holiness in response to its precepts. It was at once the spiritualising, and the development, of the law of Holiness; for it had equally a retrospective and a prospective effect. The visions of the prophets illuminated the Law by unveiling its hidden meanings, and thus carried the mind beyond the scope of the Law into the future by the suggestion of glories yet to be revealed, lifting the veil before their enkindled sight more and more, as they watched anxiously to discern the whole mystery of the purposes of God. The Revelation, moreover, had this singular characteristic, that it was undefined and undefinable, and on this very account influential, because ever quickening the soul’s energies, enkindling boundless hope, awakening the intensest eagerness without satisfying it, and yet preparing the heart for that which was about to come. It was like in the natural world to the effect produced on those who travelling over a mountain range see ever rising before them peak after peak, and as they mount are stirred by the view of the height beyond height, and cannot rest till they have attained the farthest eminence. The Revelation in Prophecy was the connecting link, between the past and the future, opening the future to those who had profited by the past; meaningless to the unspiritual

¹ Heb. i. 1.

and indeavour, but replete with ever quickening life to the children of faith and prayer.

V. The fourth Revelation led onward by a special preparation of heart to that for the sake of which creation itself had been called into being,—that which alone could satisfy the cravings implanted in Humanity—even the Revelation of God Himself “manifest in the flesh,” the Incarnation of the Eternal and Blessed Son of God. It was the entrance of God into the sphere of created nature, influencing all being, and to abide for ever afterwards mysteriously present as the Head and inner Life of the creation. All previous Revelations had been external to God, representing His works or His attributes, impressing on the soul of man some special knowledge of His will and purposes. But this Revelation involved a communication of the Divine nature itself, a union of God and Man through a personal indwelling. For in becoming Incarnate God took all things appertaining to man’s nature ; so that through this personal assimilation of our substance He might become perfectly One with us ; and we one with Him. And the result was, that as under the Law of God’s covenant with man, man might truly say, “I am Thine, and Thou art mine,” so in this mystery of the Incarnation he might as truly say, “Thou, O LORD, art become as I am, very Man, and I, O LORD, am as Thou art, Thou Thyself in me, and I in Thee.”

The Passion and Crucifixion of our LORD were really but parts of the mystery of the Incarnation ; and yet they were so astounding and momentous an addition to that great mystery, that they ought to be viewed separately. And this more especially with a view to the order of thought preserved in these Instructions,

8 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

for they exercise an unparalleled influence in binding the soul to God. They were occasioned by the Fall of Man, and are thus a secondary not a primary idea in the mystery of the Incarnation, a supereminent addition of unspeakable humiliation and ineffable Love, as the Fall, though foreseen and anticipated, was no necessary part of the creation, really separable from it, though because of the Divine foreknowledge embraced in the original order of the predestination of God. Through these mysteries of mercy alone the guilt and doom of sin have been met and overcome, and the sinner raised to a capacity for grace. And thus they have become themselves fresh centres of thought and life, like to the Incarnation itself.

VI. The seventh Revelation was a yet further advance in the mystery of the Manifestation of God. It was the Revelation of God in the innermost recesses of man's being through His Presence in His Spirit. The Incarnation was a visible manifestation of the Divine Person and Character, acting upon man from without, and raising him into a capacity for union with Himself, so as to become "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh," but not acting inwardly so as of Itself to apply the grace which It obtained. His Pentecostal manifestation on the contrary was wholly invisible, and acts upon man within himself, endowing him with the full results of all previous Revelations, and raising him into a higher order of spiritual life by making him a partaker of the Divine operations through an actual indwelling of the Same SPIRIT. The result of the Incarnation was to exalt our nature to be a very Temple of God and a Tabernacle meet for His indwelling. The gift of Pentecost was the personal applica-

tion to individual souls of the life thus imparted to our nature in CHRIST. We became first members of the Body of CHRIST, and afterwards through union with His Body by this further grace partakers also of His Spirit. It is only through this indwelling that the inner being of man receives light, and new powers of vision, by which the inner world and the whole mystery of God and of His dealings, so far as they are yet to be discerned, may be unfolded to his gaze, are vouchsafed. It is only thus that he becomes "partaker of the Divine nature" which in the Spirit he beholds.

VII. With the grace of Pentecost the Revelations of God close as to the gifts imparted in this life. But a further insight is vouchsafed into the future, though the substance of it is afar off, and reserved to be the bliss of other worlds and other states of being. And this future glory is even now open to the eye of faith. Only dimly indeed through an anticipative faith can we contemplate the Beatific Vision and its transforming influence and blissful effects in our glorified nature. Yet is it given to us to apprehend some measure of the greatness and truth of the mystery about to be unfolded to the enraptured sight of the transformed members of CHRIST in the Day of the final Revelation of Himself; a Bliss which will be the result of the yet greater Revelation of God, "as He is," in actual vision, in which the Redeemed shall be perfected, becoming through this vision like Him, and actually one with Him.

We may now trace the outlines of the progress of a true Christian life, and show how its several stages bear a striking correspondence to the succession of Revelations which we have briefly surveyed. Only be it

10 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

borne in mind that we are not now concerned with the influence of these Revelations on the progress of Humanity at large, but simply their influence on the life of individual souls; and therefore our own experience will enter into the results to which we shall be led.

1. The first Revelation, that of God in creation, finds its counterpart in the life of pure childhood. The true state of earliest infancy is a simple and joyous consciousness of life, a communing with the visible and the palpable to which gradually it learns to adapt itself, whilst yielding an instinctive but unintelligent homage to a Being felt to be within and above all being, a mysterious sense which breathes in the first accents of prayer, and mingles a feeling of awe with all life's earliest playfulness. It is as if the soul, though even now manifesting the effects of the Fall, is still walking in Paradise with God and His holy angels. It is the spring of life in which the child, making its first essays in contact with material forms, learns its earliest lessons of duty, and experiences under the checks of infantine discipline the restraining principle of external law. This state of earliest childhood passes quickly, but the vision of what has once been remains, however latently, hidden in the memory to revive in after days of trial and sorrow as the type, though faint, of what the redeemed shall become hereafter in the Presence of God, when the consciousness of pure life and the fulness of heavenly joy and unruffled peace shall be the blessed recompense of faithfulness matured through much patience and manifold experience of the discipline of life.

2. The earliest idea of religion succeeding to the instinctive consciousness of childhood is that of a cove-

nant. It is the first thought connected with Holy Baptism, and the one again strongly impressed in Confirmation. The sacramental graces then sealed upon the soul invest the idea of a covenant with a peculiarly sacred power. Then grows on the awakening intelligence a trust in Divine protection, a confidence within the soul enabling it to cast itself upon an unseen Power, as a child upon its parent's bosom, to tell out fully its first fresh tales of sorrow, or of trembling joy; and while thus occupied the child unconsciously apprehends the great primary truth of the Personality of God. Then likewise in a similar unreasoning way are formed the first elements of the knowledge of relative duty, and self-responsibility, as the conscience begins to realise its own momentous part in the sacred covenant. Religion thus gradually becomes an intelligent act, with an evergrowing sense of obligation. But youthful religion, beautiful in its hopefulness, is unsuspecting alike of the power of sin within, and of temptation without. It sports itself in the confidence of its romantic inspirations on the very verge of the stern experience which advancing years must bring, and which will probably shed a profound sadness over the spirit of the dream, but without which life would lose its real sanctification. Happy is it for the advancing life, when the sense of the covenanted love of God, which is the beauty of the religion of early years, can still live on ever deepening with the increase of power and spiritual gifts, while the romance passes into the far deeper truth of the struggle of the spirit against the flesh, as it learns to "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

3. The third great change in the soul's progress, which must follow, if life be true, corresponds with the

12 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

third Revelation. This takes place when the conscience awakens to perceive the holiness of God in contrast with its own sinfulness. The first real sense of sin is the most marked crisis in our spiritual life. Not indeed that the sense of sin, as it is in itself, in its root and essence, dawns upon the soul in this early stage of its experience, even in the faintest degree, but the feeling is at work more or less acutely, of some one or more sinful acts, standing out prominently in the soul's past history, and often striking upon the consciousness with a force and a meaning entirely new and startling. In that crisis of the soul's history the consciousness of a Divine Law claiming an absolute obedience, and the awful Justice of One to Whom we must needs give an account, carries with it to every individual soul something of the terrors which caused the Israelites to tremble before Mount Sinai, when they could not bear to look even on the outward signs of the Presence of God, or hear His Voice; or as when at the first consciousness of sin our first parents fled into the darkness to hide themselves, as they hoped, from the eyes of God. A very revolution is then wrought within the soul, as if the person thus moved were not the same being that once, as a child, had played fearlessly with Divine Mysteries, sporting as it trustfully lay in the Bosom of God. The guilty consciousness now covers the whole field of view, often pursuing the soul with undefinable terrors. It is then that notwithstanding all the pain and shame of exposure, the thought of confession, to a parent it may be, or to a Priest, may be welcomed, as an indescribable relief, as the means of outwardly and palpably laying down a burden too heavy to be borne. And then, so true is the correspondence of the soul's

growing experience with the progressive Revelation of God, that then first arises the desire for discipline to guide the interior life, a desire for rule to regulate its constant movements and acts, as though the awakened consciousness of the Holiness of God, Who is the very Source and Perfection of Law, created in the soul of the creature a sense of the need of Law to prevail within itself, as the only means of attaining conformity with Him Whom the soul is beginning earnestly to serve. Freedom from the guilt of sin is followed by the longing for a yet greater repose in the possession of a power to chasten the irregular passions and the unruly will, which are now seen to have been the secret agencies at work in producing such self-degradation, such bitterness of remorse.

4. There is a prophetic faculty within man which may indeed, and too often does, spend itself on mere empty dreams and vain imaginings, and which is the root of infinite forms of unreality. But it is this power, when guided by the Spirit of God, which assists the soul in the onward course predestined for it according to His will. Out of the depths of this supernatural instinct arise visions strangely haunting the soul, and causing it to be restless and impatient, while they unfold themselves and take their definite shapes in special vocations, whether in varied forms of self-devotion in the world, or in the Religious Life, as the HOLY GHOST "divideth to every one severally as He will" according to the diversities of His Gifts. And hence arise all the varied aims and aspirations which determine the bent and purpose of the soul's energies and efforts.

This mysterious stage of the soul's history finds its counterpart in the fourth Revelation, and is in truth to

14 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

every individual life God Himself revealed in prophecy. For it is when the soul is freed from the oppressive guilt of sin, and has yielded itself to the Law of Holiness, that the vision of great achievements far beyond its present attainments opens before its gaze. It cannot rest simply in obedience to the precepts of righteousness, however great the change may have been which marked the previous crisis. The soul seeks to spring forward: it yearns for some sphere of self-devotion adequate to the development of its newly awakened energies. And then the heavenly light dawns, revealing itself dimly and confusedly at first, more and more clearly and confidently afterwards, often only as sudden and passing gleams, but with an assurance that the vision will at last be understood, and that it is indeed a Revelation of God involving a future in which every power may find its fulness of exercise, its satisfaction, and its true end, like to the vision which broke upon Samuel in the Temple of God at the dead of night when the voice spake and he knew it not, but he laid him down again to sleep, and waited, and listened, and again it was heard, and was understood.

5. It may seem strange to place the transforming influence of the mystery of the Incarnation so late in the experience of the soul as is indicated by the place which it occupies in this series of the Divine Revelations. It might be expected that the truth which of all others forms the basis of the Christian life, and the Christian's hope, would be the first to work its effects upon him. But it is not so. This primary doctrine is but slowly apprehended, as a living truth, however readily it may be acknowledged from the first as an unquestioned dogma. Still more slowly does it sink into

the soul, as an influential principle of power to become a centre of thought and action. It would seem as if this Revelation, being not like a code of precepts, or an instinctive consciousness, but the very Word of God Himself, the express Image of the FATHER unveiling Himself, needed for its reception a greater elevation and development of the soul's powers, a matured experience somewhat more in proportion to the greatness of the vision; that the love of JESUS could only be apprehended, as the gift of love developed within the soul; that both the intellect and the heart required considerable growth in grace before they could lay hold of anything real and substantial in the actual Presence of the Living God.

It is not that any created understanding can in our present stage of being comprehend "the length and breadth, the depth and height," of a mystery which "passeth knowledge," but that there is an "unction of the Holy One" vouchsafed to those who have used aright His earlier gifts, which however dimly and imperfectly, yet surely, makes known the great and blessed secret, so far at least that the soul may rejoice and live in some real apprehension of the momentous truth. And in proportion as the mysterious vision grows, glimpses of the inner Being and the Mind of God, of depth within depth, break in upon the soul, though as in a glass darkly, "unveiling the Infinite and the Eternal," according to the blessed assurance which the same promise gives; "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the FATHER." And as this inward sight advances into the blissful consciousness of a personal union with God in CHRIST, of advancing perfection through a fulfilment of His Likeness in us, of fellowship with His sufferings

and His Death, of triumphs in the pure life of faith, so grows the soul more and more steadfastly onward towards its true end.

6. But even this most blessed Mystery of the Incarnation, and of a union with God "through the veil which is His Flesh," could not satisfy all the cravings of the soul even in this life. There are needs in the heart of Humanity which are instinctive anticipations of a yet more intimate communion of the spirit with the very Spirit of God. And this leads us to the operations of the great Pentecostal Gift, the last Revelation of the wonderful series vouchsafed in this world, and which immediately succeeded the manifestation of the Incarnate God. As Baptism, the new birth in CHRIST, is followed by the sevenfold gift in Confirmation, even so in the experience of the soul the realisation of our union with God through the grace of the Incarnation, is succeeded by the higher consciousness of our spiritual union with Him. For while to know CHRIST in us, in our being "bone of His Bone and flesh of His Flesh," is a joy beyond all thought, to know Him in us in the Spirit, forming the same mind, transforming us into the very same character, is a higher knowledge, and a more perfect joy. The dawning light of supernatural truth, the glimpses of the inner depths of the Mind of God, the kindling fervours of divine love, the energies, the impulses, the new powers raising the soul above all that can be seen and felt,—these are the elements of the advancing experience which God's most perfect Revelation in this life communicates to His Elect, preparing the soul for the yet fuller Revelations of the world to come.

7. What yet remains, reserved for the blessed in the

fulness of the Divine predestination, is the fruit of the Beatific Vision promised in God's good time, to those who are prepared for the surpassing light of His glory, according to the same law of progress, which we have been tracing, and which we have seen determining the course of our experiences in this life, when, and not before, we shall be wholly "like Him," for we shall "see Him as He is." But even as some measure of that future Manifestation may form the material of wondering contemplation in this life, so too there are forms of spirituality within our reach even here, the infancy of our future maturity, which grow unseen, unknown, whether to others or to oneself, as the fruit of the faint and shadowy glimpses of a future glory.

If it really be, as I have desired to show, that the true life of redeemed man advances thus in orderly progression, from grace to grace, as God reveals Himself to the soul, then these successive stages are tests by which to judge of its progress. It is not indeed to be supposed that such changes can be distinguished with the same accuracy in the individual life, as in the history of collective humanity. Within the regenerate soul trained in the light which ever radiates everywhere within the Kingdom of CHRIST, all past Revelations are perpetually acting, as though gathered up and included in the first gift of spiritual enlightenment. They mingle together, reflecting and illustrating each other, but yet they must needs ever bear one to the other the same mutual relation, though they may be variously apprehended according to the circumstances affecting the growth of each individual life. Nor are these successive stages of the Divine manifestation to be regarded merely as tests of progress. They assist the study of

18 *The Divine Revelations viewed generally.*

the interior life as marks by the way, showing the course along which we are predestined to advance, and the successive efforts required to be made; as in a journey it facilitates the traveller's course to know what spots are to form at once his places of rest, and the starting-points of renewed exertion.

Blessed indeed are those who, dwelling on the records of their past history, can with any truth say, "I have known such and such changes in my soul's experience. I have known a response, however inadequate, to the growing Revelations of my God. Through His infinite love mine has been an advancing life. I wait for the fulness of the promise, even the open vision of the Face of the Living God."

We may here pause, in trust that the Blessed Spirit Whose Light illuminates the longing sight, as we seek to read the whole mystery of God, may guide us in our search and direct our steps, as we "seek after Him, if haply we may find Him" at last, in the fulness of His eternal glory.

II.

THE PROGRESS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

THE object of these Instructions is to trace the progress of God's Revelations of Himself, and the consequent advance of Divine knowledge, together with its intended results in the heart of man. A capacity of development in our nature sufficient to correspond with the purpose of God in thus guiding us onward, is assumed as a primary law of our nature. But it will assist towards the clearer explanation of the object proposed in these addresses, if this capacity for development is exemplified, and some instances given of this law of progress as affecting our renewed nature. One line of development will sufficiently exhibit the general truth; and the one most intimately connected with the proposed inquiry is the series of graces which specially bind the soul to God, and which must always form the latent strength of its inner communion with Him. There is no common name which includes this series of graces, but they have one end, which is fellowship with God, and their order corresponds in some measure with the soul's progress through its different stages commencing with its infantine state.

I. The earliest development of life, as it exists in infancy, is accompanied with a pure consciousness,

which however dimly, apprehends within and beyond the visible forms of things a supernatural Presence. It is the dawning of the opening day. It is as a shining light within the soul mingling with the light of the eternal realities surrounding it, which together act and react upon each other. This consciousness is a remnant of the original pure creation in the Image of God, and when illuminated by baptismal grace it is raised to a dim rudimental perception of God and of heavenly things. It cannot be termed faith, for there is no act of the will, nor any co-operation of the intelligence. It is a grace without effort or discipline, and therefore implies no virtue, or moral character. But it is a Gift of God in a being formed for communion with Him, exhibiting, to one who watches the first springs of life, the fresh bright sense of His Presence in Whom it awoke out of nothingness, the first impression of His Hand at Whose touch it assumed form and stature. The heart of the child anticipates in some visionary mode of apprehension the intuitions of the matured intelligence of later years, as the day-dream often forecasts the realities of a future destiny. It sees, though without perceiving; it gazes on a vision which it cannot grasp. It responds to ideas and uses words which can have no realised meaning. Yet the truth and power of this supernatural light pervading the first consciousness of a child, and colouring its perceptions, few probably will deny; though as life grows this unintelligent spiritual sense must pass into higher gifts, or else it fades away, as a spectre of the night, under the pressure of material things which more and more attract and absorb the growing faculties of the mind; only it will survive as a memory bearing witness to the

realities of a higher world which it has once seen as afar off; to the faithful, a blessed assurance of God's first drawings of love, to the faithless, an instinctive self-condemnation of a lost vocation, and a forfeited heaven.

II. The first advance in the spiritual life which succeeds the supernatural consciousness of the child, is faith, like to it in that it is concerned with the same inner world of invisible realities, but unlike in all other respects. If at first sight faith may seem inferior to a child's instinctive consciousness, because it discerns the inner world under greater difficulties and often with a more perplexed view, it can only be by a superficial observer that such a conclusion could be drawn. Faith has indeed to feel its way, and to wait for guidance, before it can venture onward, but even in its earliest stage it implies the intelligent acting of a higher state of mind, and a direct effort of the will. It is a personal energy with a moral purpose even in its feeblest stage. Nor can it continue to exist without a principle of self-discipline. It grows through the struggle of the light with the darkness—of the heavenly light which has united itself with the spirit or higher element of the soul, warring against the flesh, or lower element, which on the other hand is ever tending to unite itself with the outward semblances of material things. Faith therefore implies a growing experience, and an advancing knowledge in the highest regions of real life, a knowledge of the true relations of things both visible and invisible, and of the distinctions between the Creator and the creature, between one's own personal life and the forms of being external to it in the infinite diversities of existence. Not only does faith grow onward

while the child's consciousness is at best stationary, or rather ever tending to fade away, but it also possesses a practical living energy, a capacity for action in which a child's dreamlike sense could have no share. And again, secondly, faith is an inherent power in the soul's life, working itself into its substance more and more, and becoming part of it, through the effects of the mutual active correspondence between Divine grace and the soul's responsive efforts ; while the consciousness of childhood is a mere endowment, or rather a reflection cast upon the soul from the influences of creative power brooding over the first springs of plastic life, resembling the colour of the flower or the bloom of the fruit, rather than being an integral portion of its structure. Faith is, and feels itself to be, more and more "the substance," or substantial realisation "of things hoped for ; the evidence," or evidential certainty, "of things not seen." It is in brief a personal apprehended gain, a power pervading all the faculties, directing the interior movements of the soul, the mainspring of living action, giving a bias and a shape to the growing life.

Out of the depths and nervous energy of faith grow the habit of prayer, the manifold exercise of meditation, the steady progress in a recollected sense of the Presence of God. From the same living source issue the desire for guidance and Divine rule, the cultivation of the habit of self-government, the growing sense of the need of bringing every thought and impulse, every design and purpose, into conformity with the vision of eternal righteousness and heavenly beauty. And as the spiritual perceptions grow clearer and more vivid, it assumes an increasingly steadfast sway within the chambers of the soul. Faith lives in the exercise of

conforming the interior life to the heavenly realities which it has embraced. It grows by contemplation, but it maintains and develops itself only by active correspondence with what it spiritually beholds. Through many a storm of trial, through frequent doubt, and perplexing difficulty, faith makes its way, or rather, ever gains a stronger interior hold, even as a tree becomes more firmly rooted in consequence of the wrappings and strivings of the tempest, and with its growing strength imparts a higher tone and a nobler courage to the whole character.

III. Faith in earnest minds deeply stirred by the Spirit of God rises into zeal. This grace is an advance upon faith, differing from it partly in its greater depth of purpose and more quickened energy of will. Zeal implies a concentration of the powers of the inward life upon some special end which appears to the soul calculated to promote the Glory of God, the final object on which it is in truth set. It grasps unseen things with an intense practical tenacity. While faith is characterised simply by maintaining a firm hold on the objects presented to the spiritual sight, the distinguishing mark of zeal is the effort to realise its ardent longings in some practical embodiment of its purpose, and this at any cost of self-sacrifice. Its ardour and intensity of action are its marked features. But zeal is distinguished yet further by this—that it unites in active effort the natural and supernatural powers of the soul. It is a combination of nature and of grace. It is not merely, like faith, a pure spiritual apprehension exalting our nature. Zeal implies that the whole man has been quickened into life, and actively set on the accomplishment of what is believed to be the will of God.

It takes up into itself whatever of physical energy or intellectual capacity may have been given ; and because of this combination of constitutional power with Divine grace, a concentration of different energies co-operating towards a common end, zeal becomes capable of such intense determination, such stupendous enterprises. It gathers up the separate lines of life and exhausts their strength with a unity of purpose, which surmounts all difficulties and converts the obstacles which daunt ordinary minds into occasions of nobler effort and grander successes.

It is what our LORD intended when He employed the term "faith," in the sense of moral force in special connection with Apostolic grace for the conversion of the world ; when He said, "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."¹ So intent may become the view of the soul when raised to this state, so overpowering the motive force which bears the soul onward, that it knows only the Divine intention in the act, so that all difficulties are lost, all hindrances overcome, in the one thought of the glory of God triumphing in the fulfilment of its desires. So absorbed may be the mental state that it resents eagerly whatever opposes or questions its purpose, or its plans. It sees only the Hand that beckons on, hears only the voice that calls, feels nothing but the Spirit which has possessed the soul, and bears it on, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth." Zeal has no misgivings ; fears no consequences. The soul knows but the one thought, that it is the instrument of God for

¹ S. Matth. xvii. 20.

the definite end in view which it has been predestined to accomplish.

From this grace grow all more ardent aspirations, all resolutions of entire self-sacrifice, all grander aims, all works and charities of extraordinary devotion. It is the secret spring of the heroic lives, the glorious martyrdoms of saints. It is the explanation of the distinctive grandeur in the spiritual world which separates off the few more faithful, more devoted, from among the rest of the true children of God, raising them into the higher pre-eminent positions of usefulness, of holy influence, of surpassing sufferings, of masterly achievements in His kingdom. It is what led S. James and S. John to desire to sit, the "one on the right Hand and the other on the left Hand" of JESUS in His glory, and to feel "able" to drink "the cup" and "be baptized with the baptism," which were to be the conditions of their pre-eminence. It is the following of CHRIST in those exalted paths which confound the world, and often perplex even the faithful, such as Himself exhibited in the Temple among the money-changers, and which no ordinary law can determine, but which is a law to itself, which its own motive power justifies, as when He said, "The zeal of Thine House hath eaten Me up." It is during this stage of life, developed in various degrees of power, that the soul gives itself to God in special devotions, and seals its acts by irreversible vows, sometimes with clearly defined aims, and express purposes, sometimes with only a general tendency equally clear and decided, but waiting for a further revelation of the Spirit to shape into substantial form the as yet indistinct vision. It is when thus moved that the soul makes its secret covenants with God, and binds itself

to issues the consequences of which it cannot anticipate, but which are forechosen and loved for His dear sake Who is to be glorified in them—issues, which however dimly realised, nevertheless give the bent and tenor, the form and hue, to the whole after life, and determine even the character of the glory of the soul's eternal destiny.

IV. Zeal of its own nature, in itself, is an undisciplined restless grace. It is in fact given only for a special end, to fix the soul on its true objects, and confirm its future course with a self-determining impulse. It is therefore of the most momentous value as the mainspring of faithful active service; but yet it is not "the rest which remaineth for the people of God." It has not as its possession the repose into which the soul must enter before it attains a steadfastly ordered course. Nor is zeal necessarily accompanied with that balance of the powers of the mind which, when inbreathed of God and consecrated to Him, forms the basis on which yet greater heights of spirituality are to be built up.

Zeal is accompanied with many causes of inward disturbance and irregularity, with anxieties and despondencies, with strugglings of impatience and wrath, which act all the more strongly in proportion to the energy of the character, troubling the soul's peace, and jeopardising its consistency, and this often at the most critical periods of life. They are results of the fervours of zeal not as yet chastened or subdued by the counteraction of other necessary ingredients in the spiritual life. The great danger ever present in such a case consists in this, that the promptings of self-will may be mistaken for the inspirations of the Spirit of God, the eagerness of an aroused nature blinding the perceptions of con-

science, and causing it to substitute the rule of its own desires for the eternal purposes of God.

These possible dangers are to be met and overcome by the yet more advanced grace of Trust. This grace consists in a restful assurance of the power and ceaseless guidance of God, in a faithful dependence on His promises, His personal dealing with one's own individual life and destiny. And this state of mind is generated out of an increasing experience, and a keener sense of what God is, and what He does for His own elect. Trust grows as the soul feels itself firmly embraced within the covenant of God, and learns the full extent of what is necessarily implied in the fact of a personal individualizing predestination of love ordering all one's life. It feeds and nourishes itself on the certainties of the predisposing will of God affecting all our destinies even in its least details, of His deep unfailing tenderness, His considerateness, His ceaseless care, His desire for the perfection of His elect, His sure promise, that all shall "work together for good to them that love Him."

Trust lays hold of these living truths, and in proportion as it grasps them anxiety subsides, fear and despondency are dissipated, impatience is checked, self-will is overcome, and the agitated, disordered temperament is hushed to rest. By degrees the steadfast onward development of this better knowledge of God, as it works "patience, and patience experience, and experience hope," leads on to a union of the higher will with the will of God; and a habit is formed of calm waiting upon God, and with it comes an evenly-balanced state like to that which characterises God Himself—an evenness arising from the measure and play of mighty

forces, once mutually conflicting but now by grace harmonised. In such a state there may remain all the former depth of purpose, the same energy of will, an equal ardour, but with these fruits of zeal there mingle now the grateful recognition of a higher law, the calmness of an entire self-surrender, and the reverent acceptance of Divine guidance, which has become sweeter, more precious to the soul than even the fulfilment of its own desires, or the anticipated success of its own plans. Indeed a higher, truer strength has been thus attained in the release from the narrow fetters of one's own wilfulness; a nobler freedom in being no longer the supposed master of one's own fortunes; but instead an eagerness of heart which arises from an unsparing readiness to follow the call of God at whatever cost; the simple unbiassed pliancy of will that responds with equal faithfulness to each fresh expression of the Mind of God. The soul is free, because it has now no choice; it is calm and restful, because its desires are subdued; it is strong, because there is no division of self-interest to detract from its full pure earnestness. The powers of the soul then turn either way, as the Spirit within them may direct, a recollected intelligent obedience pervading the mind, the heart, the will, so that they become as the mysterious "likeness of the four living creatures" of the Prophet's vision; "They went, every one straight forward, whither the Spirit was to go, they went, and they turned not when they went."¹ Trust grows steadfast and complete as the soul learns what God is to oneself, and what oneself ought ever to be to God, as the true relations between the Creator and the creature are established, and the absolute overruling

¹ Ezek. i. 12.

will of Almighty God, and the fallible freewill of the child of His love, are reconciled.

V. But the manifestations of Divine mercy, the outward and the inward alike, are ever acting to allure the soul onward to a yet higher grace, to the one which is alone the fulfilment of the perfect commandments of God, which alone unites the soul to God, even the grace of love, which, if true, makes the soul one with God, for "God is Love," and "whoso dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Trust is a power of waiting calmly, without doubt or anxiety, resting in what God is to the soul, and what His will may determine as its appointed destiny. But the warmth, the affectionateness, the sweetness, the rapture which give to Christian lives and Christian acts their special character and beauty, their special likeness to the life and acts of Jesus, are not the properties of trust, which is comparatively a passionless grace, but of love. Trust might be merely the conformity of the soul to an Almighty overruling will, without any consciousness of a personal God, and therefore without the feeling of attachment which can exist only towards a person who loves and can be loved in return.

Moreover there is a fervid unsparingness in love which leads the soul onward to efforts and achievements which the calmer inspirations of trust could never aspire to or even conceive. There is in love a generosity and largeness of view embracing manifold schemes of service without reference to the hindrances or even the sacrifices involved, which is far beyond the reach of the state of mind implied in trust, and from which even zeal might shrink, or be incapable of discerning. Love has passed beyond the idea of reposing

all its confidence upon God; it spends its thoughts on the one endeavour to please Him. Love implies and presupposes trust, and it is because of the entire confidence ceaselessly felt that love goes forth in its boundless aspirations of self-devotion.

But the special distinction between the two graces lies in this, that while trust rests in God because He is Almighty, and orders all things in perfect wisdom and perfect mercy, love rests on God simply because He is God, and therefore cannot fail to guide rightly His own elect, however long they may have in patience to wait for it, because His will, whatever it be, must be truest, wisest, best. Love rests simply in the thought that God is what He is, and does what He does, nor would it have aught different. In a true sense love is blind; it can see no fault, no hardness, no inconsistency, no unfairness; it would alter nothing, lest it lose Him as He is. God would not be the same God, in the thought of love, if He were anything but what He is, even though He demanded less sacrifice. Love therefore sees God equally in the darkness or in the light, in utter despair or in the tranquillity of perfect peace, in the sharpness of the Cross or in the full sweetness of the Divine consolations. Love sees God and comparatively only God in all things, because of its certainty that all things are only what He wills or permits them to be; because to its apprehension they are all in Him. Love reasons not, questions not, argues not. It is undisturbed by the suggestions or doubts of others; it survives the heat of controversy, the struggle of party, the collision of conflicting affections, the incongruities of warring systems, the faithlessness or hypocrisy of seeming friends; it clings only the more

firmly because of the violence that threatens to separate it from its life, its joy, simply because it can know no other rest, and the very tenacity of despair only binds it the firmer where alone the hope of existence is centred. And the same reasons show how love surpasses zeal, which, because it has remains of self, is swayed by hindrances which love in its pure self-sacrifice can never know. The same unconquerable unselfish purpose bears love ever onward from one effort to another, one act of self-devotion to another, as the opportunities of sacrifice may arise; and as love grows in experience of His faithfulness, for Whose sake it has resolved to surrender all, it feels ever-fresh springs of joy, and with ever-renewed powers concentrates its gathering forces on the ever-expanding view of beneficent duty or exalted service, which Divine love claims as the response to its own ceaseless lavishness of blessing. It becomes, as it perfects itself, a selfless energy of being, the heart simply breathing out inexhaustible desires of corresponding with the generosity of God which has become its law, its one example of true life.

VI. But beyond the convictions of faith, beyond the fervours of zeal, beyond the calm repose of trust, beyond even the ardent aspirations of love, there is a yet further stage in the spiritual life—the habitual recollectedness, in which these several graces unite and merge their various powers, so that the result becomes a restful play of manifold Divine energies, like the ocean calm, sustained, directed in its predestined course by God. It is a state in which grace has become an instinct, as though returning to the first consciousness of childhood, like to it in its simplicity, its brightness, its confidence, though most unlike as to the conditions out

of which it arises, for this matured spirituality of soul is the consequence of long practical self-discipline, and innumerable efforts of co-operation with the will of God under the infinitely varied forms of trial to which our earthly life is heir. It is a state in which there seems to be scarcely any more need of watchfulness or even of thought, so constant is the determination of the will, so clear the view of the Divine purpose, so practised the application of all faculties to the various calls in which the Spirit speaks. What had once been a mere dream in the imaginings of youthful devotion, is realised as an abiding state, though it may be stripped of the bright colourings of fancy, and embodied in commonplace details. It has been a strange history, the eager, often ecstatic vision of the ideal devotion of earlier days, broodings of the meditative fancy now become ingrained in the texture of the soul's life, through hard-won compliance with the ceaseless exactions of duty, and struggles of the strong firm will, or through difficulties and fears, but at last issuing in more than the youthful dream dared to forecast, of conformity with the Mind of God, of assimilation with the Life of CHRIST. By a new unearthly sense, the fruit of long experience, the soul has learnt to discern God and His will in all things, with a ready practised glance, and through habitual pliancy of will to yield a glad unwavering obedience. It is a mingling of the contemplative and active powers, so true and consistent that the greatest exertions are marked by collectedness of temper and of thought, and meditation is accompanied with a practical faithfulness which sheds an uniform sweetness and equanimity over the whole bearing. A unity of life and character is discerned under very variable circum-

stances. Life has become most real, because it is the faithful correspondence of the renewed being with the purposes and designs of God.

This the last stage of spirituality which can be known on earth is not any specific grace, but rather a maturity of many combined graces brought into harmony through self-control and careful thoughtfulness, wisely diligent in the use of all our daily opportunities of spiritual advancement. Its very perfection lies in this—that it may be exhibited as it were in neutral tints in ordinary things, and needs not the stimulus of unusual incident, or the adventitious aid of outward circumstances. It is so equable, unassuming, childlike, that it appears to cost no effort, as in works of high art which betray no labour, but are really the fruit of intensest study and the absorbed devotion of many years. It is so simple that it seems rather the natural gift of an amiable temperament, but that the spiritual eye sees through the surface something of the depths of holy discipline out of which the unearthly charm has grown, and which bears the scar of many a wound from the stern warfare through which the soul has attained its victory. It is the perfection of the recollected state, in one who has learnt to walk in faithfulness with God. Nor is it strange that the highest attainable beauty of a spiritual character should be no specific endowment, but the harmonious commingling of many varied endowments, even as the glory of the light which clothes the visible world with beauty is not any one specific colour, but the harmonious play of many hues blending into the pure whiteness which is seemingly one, yet composed and formed of colours endlessly diversified.

In tracing these successive stages in the spiritual life

as marks by which to determine progress, it must be borne in mind that while viewed abstractedly in relation to each other, such an order of sequence among spiritual graces exists; yet practically in the experience of life they are not necessarily thus distinguished, nor is the progress from the one to the other grace thus clear and regular. These elements may intermingle in various degrees at any period of the soul's course, or an unusual prominence may be given to one or the other grace; or there may be a premature or a late development of any one particular grace at a marked crisis of the life, circumstances variously disturbing the regular order as viewed scientifically, and thus rendering the formation of characters more or less uncertain. And again at every period of the life's course the earlier as well as the later stages of grace need to be cherished and maintained, lest any fail; for no measure of advance is in itself a security or guarantee for the secure possession of that which has been previously reached. To the earlier as well as the advanced graces in a truly progressive life the warning equally applies,—“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The reason for these variations in the spiritual life is evident. The gift of regeneration contains all the seeds of the Divine life. The HOLY SPIRIT indwelling in the regenerate soul in His creative power from the beginning may give forth one or another grace differently according to His own inscrutable purposes, or special outward circumstances; or natural dispositions may predispose to one or another feature of spiritual life. And moreover, at any moment the Master Hand may change the order of the sacred harmony. And thus under the reign of the same mysterious laws of grace with a general

unity there may be manifold diversity. But at the same time experience, equally as revealed truth, teaches that there is a law of advance in our renewed nature, "from grace to grace, and from glory to glory;" that it is according to the law of the Spirit of God, Who is a God of order, that we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

There are, however, two cautions to be carefully observed. We are not to measure our faithfulness by considering the state we have attained. Our faithfulness at any given time is to be determined by the use we are making of the grace then vouchsafed to us, and the opportunities within our reach, as well as the tension of our purpose to persevere. God in His mercy regards us as we are at each particular moment, and accepts us not even then as we are in ourselves, or because of anything in ourselves, but because of Him Whose glorious Presence He sees in us, and whose mind His eye descries, however imperfectly, forming in us. It may be the earliest development of His grace, the first real correspondence of our spirit with His Spirit. Nevertheless He sees all the future enfolded in that pregnant germ of living power. It is His own work, and what follows is but the outflowing of the predestination of His love. And He accepts the future in the present. Should time fail, Eternity is pledged for the fulfilment of this promise in the children of His Election. On the response therefore of the soul to His call, at any period of its course, depends the measure of its faithfulness. Intense anxiety must indeed necessarily attend an inquiry into such a question as this. But beyond this careful self-examination anxiety should have no place. For in true hearts to doubt the future is to distrust God. We

have our own part in the present, but not beyond. The future rests with God alone. We are safe in Him so long as from day to day, from hour to hour, "we hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Our steadfast cleaving to present grace is our security for future steadfastness. The present time is the guarantee for the time to come. The promise to the faithful at any moment is absolute; "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure."¹ "He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."² As we cling to the present assurance we have the sure warrant to "lay hold" also "of the hope set before us." We are to glorify God in a two-fold manner. We glorify Him by the full response to His immediate gifts. The repose of a childlike confidence in Him for the future also glorifies Him.

The second caution, as greatly needed as the first, is this,—that there must be a strict limit to the way in which we watch and speculate upon our onward growth. Ordinarily changes in our progress can be discerned only at marked and distant periods. It is so in natural growths. We cannot trace the movement of life from day to day, even in the short-lived produce of the field, with all the advantages of freedom from untimely checks, and under genial skies. Still more must it be impossible in the case of a growth which has eternity for its field, under all the diversities of a ceaseless struggle against opposing forces, and with constant liability to relapse. We may encourage some assurance as to the steps gained at distant intervals, but even then care must be taken to modify the judgment by the fear lest subsequent trial prove the gain to be, at least in part, owing to the lessened force of temptation, or the

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 16.

² Deut. xxxi. 6.

more favourable circumstances of the hour, even as a self-distrustful judgment may solace itself in the belief that there may have been growth, though unseen, when there was no marked decline. We are very liable to be deceived by despondency and fear, equally as by a sanguine self-flattery. And the one is as unjust a witness as the other, though the latter be far the more faulty temper. As to the measure of our growth equally as to the fact of our growing the same rule applies. The only true sign of progress is a present faithfulness ; for life is necessarily growth. The putting forth of the will in union with the creative informing power of God is in itself an increase of spiritual stature, an accession to the substance of the spiritual life, a strengthening of the character, a rising into fresh domains of spiritual aspiration, a more matured exercise of former attainments. Though we cannot see, and may not even venture to rest on the assumption, yet we need never doubt that while we are actively alive to the calls of God, we are surely growing in grace, and so in union with our Lord. At the same time it must ever be remembered that the very secret of life is increase, that growth is the only sure tangible reality. "The will of God is our perfection." To develop the powers which He has lodged in our renewed nature in union with His own perfected Humanity is the very purpose of our earthly trial. We have no means of truly fathoming the depths of glory laid up within us through the Divine Presence imparted to us ; but we can never draw deeply enough out of this hidden sea. To meet the calls of God which ever lead us onward by the putting forth of latent powers which never fail to sustain the efforts of the will, is our one true response to

His boundless lovingkindness. We are called to live more in hope than in experiences, more in venturing onward than in contemplation, more in what God wills for us than in what we are. We may be far more advanced than we dare to hope, or have power to appreciate. Only our strength is not in the realisation of the present, however glorious; but in the laying hold of some future possible attainments. As we stretch forward we rise. As we preserve our onward effort, we make sure of the steps we have gained. May He grant to us even more than other gifts, the grace of ever reaching "forward to the things that are before, to the prize of our high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS," and thus fail not through our remissness to enter into the final purposes of His predestinating love, even the full measure of the Stature of CHRIST, and whatever He has prepared for His own Elect in Himself for ever.

III.

REVELATION OF GOD IN CREATION.

THE Revelation of God in Creation is of all others the most eventful. For the coming forth of life beyond the Life of God involved, as its consequence, all subsequent Revelations. Then what seemed the solitude of God ceased. Then arose objects on which He could lavish His infinite treasures of blessing. Then time and space which had no existence before, began to be; for the one exists only in reference to the motions, the other only to the places, of finite beings. The Incarnation of God then only became possible, for His taking the Human nature into the Godhead implied the previous existence of Humanity. The Incarnation was the setting the crown, the utmost possible perfectness, upon created existences. Then also the Divine Missions of the most Holy Persons of the Blessed Trinity had scope wherein to act. For a mission of the Godhead means His going forth into the creatures to communicate His virtues beyond Himself. All the mysteries involved in the local Presence of God on earth or in Heaven; the mystery of Redemption, of the Passion and Death, of the Resurrection and Ascension, of the Redeemer; the mysteries of Providence, of Predes- tination, of the Judgment to come; the mysteries of

sin and of suffering, and of the final victory over both ; the mysteries of Divine punishment and Divine forgiveness—all lay hid in the way of sequence, and mutual relation, and possibility of development, in the primary fact of Creation.

It is especially to be noted with regard to the act of Creation that there was because of it no change in the Nature or the Life of God. For God is perfect and unchangeable from all eternity. Nor could there be because of it more life, for all life is from God. Although the new created universe was filled with living structures of infinitely varied kinds, as it could take nothing from God, so it could add nothing to Him. Nor was He less separate and alone after than He had been before Creation. For there must ever be an impassable gulf between uncreated and created Being. He suffered no loss in the giving forth of life. He received no gain through the existence of the life which He gave. He is "the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

And so it was also that eternity remained the same, and was no less than it had been before, because time had begun. Nor was infinity less, because space began to be extended. There ensued no change in what was, or had been, because of the new worlds, and new orders of existence which came forth summoned from the depths of life. The impossibility we feel in reconciling these facts lies not in the incompatibility of the realities themselves, but in the imperfection of our limited faculties. We cannot under the conditions which fix the boundaries of our present powers of thought, even in the least degree, approach towards reconciling the apparent contradictions involved in these statements.

We can only embrace them separately as objects of faith, as truths presented in successive order to our minds in reference to the contrasted spheres of uncreated and created life.

It is beyond the power of human reason even to comprehend what is meant by God creating, or giving forth life. And it is so for this reason, that we cannot distinguish in God between His Essence and Its manifestations, or between His power and His act. In scientific theology God is said to be the "purest energy or act."¹ In other words, God lives in His Power and *is* His Power; and His Power is identical with His exercise of Power. His power and His act are one. Nor again, can we comprehend how the beings which exist as the expression and result of His will are at once one with Him, through the Presence of His Power sustaining them, and yet separate from Him by the whole breadth of the distance which must ever divide the Creation from the Creator in the order of life. They have separate wills, and distinct individualities, and yet in Him alone they "live and move and have their being;" and thus by essential unity of dependence are absolutely inseparable from Him.

We are equally incapable of understanding life in God, or life outside of God; or their mutual relations. We are a mystery to ourselves; and no marvel that He, the author and the preserver of this wondrous life, is also an inscrutable mystery in Himself; or that the interdependence between Himself and us His creatures is a further mystery. When Moses at the Burning

¹ "Purest act," an expression of the Schoolmen, intended to show the perfect unity of the nature of God, the essential undistinguishableness of His internal will and His outward manifestations.

Bush, and Joshua at the entering into the Holy Land, found themselves in the immediate Presence of God, they heard a voice, saying, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."¹ And "Moses hid his face." "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship."² They were being taught the power of the sustaining guidance of God, and at the same time the inscrutable mystery in which His Presence and the operations of His power are necessarily veiled from mortal eyes. It is so likewise with us as we endeavour to contemplate the primary truths of the Being of God, and the being of the creatures; as He is in Himself towards us, or as we are in ourselves in relation to Him. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; only what He has been pleased to reveal belongs to ourselves and to our children."³ God has revealed to us the duties and blessings involved in the possession of the great gift of life, but not its nature, nor its mode of derivation from, or dependence on, Himself.

II. There was a peculiar glory in the creation of man distinguishing him from the rest of the creatures. The creatures inferior to man were called into being by a simple act of the Divine Will. Thus arose the inanimate world. "Let there be light, and there was light." A similar expression of His will summoned into existence the animate creatures. "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." "Let the earth bring forth

¹ Exod. iii. 5.

² Joshua v. 14.

³ Deut. xxix. 29.

the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beasts of the earth after his kind.”¹

But in the case of man, bearing as he does the nature and the form which God was about to assume as His own, and which once assumed would never thenceforward be laid aside, the process of creative energy was markedly different. Then for the first time the most Holy Persons of the Blessed Trinity appear upon the scene. They are manifested as in mutual consultation and common action, personally engaged. “Let Us make man in Our Image, after Our Likeness;” “Our Image,” the substantial counterpart of His Mind, the earthly representation of His essential nature; “Our Likeness,” the resemblance of His character, and attributes, of His operations and revealed Life. Then followed the exercise of creative power as a personal act, the putting forth of the Hand of God to fashion the body of man. “The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground.” Afterwards came the yet higher work in the infusion of the immaterial invisible life, enshrined in the body, perfecting the design of God; “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul”—a body, the special characteristic of which, as compared with the bodies of all other earthly creatures, is, that its wonderful organisation is adapted in all its details and proportions to be specially the instrument of mind—a “soul” not only instinct with intelligence, but illuminated and raised above itself by the possession of a spirit, kindred with the Spirit of God, and capable of corresponding with His inspirations. In this the higher part of our nature the Image, the Likeness of God, is to be found. The created spirit is the

¹ Gen. i. 3, 9, 24.

reflection in a lower world of the uncreated Spirit in the world above. The reason, the affections, the will, are the created counterparts, the representations of the Mind, the Heart, of the Living God. A growing conformity in these higher elements of being to His perfect standard is the only true sign of the fulfilment of our intended destiny. The time will come when our natures if faithful to the purpose of God, shall attain a real correspondence with the Divine perfections which they represent, when in the full development of the intelligence we shall "know even as we are known;" in the full expansion of our affections, we shall love even as we are loved, and in the energy of a perfectly renewed will we shall be wholly one in desire and in ceaseless action with the all blessed purposes of God.

The Image of God implies a yet further correspondence with Him in regard to the essential structure of our nature, in its individuality, its unity. God is One, or as theologians endeavour to express the amazing truth, "simple." He is not a composite of many attributes, though we can view God only as it were in parts. We divide Him because only thus we can apprehend Him. We are constrained to view the Truth, which is one, in a succession of details, as we view the Creation. We speak of God as having power and wisdom, and love, for human language must needs take the shape of human thoughts, but the thoughts and consequently the language imply a distinction, which does not exist, between the substance and the attributes of God, and again between the attributes themselves. For God *is* Power, *is* Wisdom, *is* Love; and Power, Wisdom, and Love, are not different qualities, but only as the varied colours of the pure Light proceeding from

Unity and resolvable into Unity, one after another opening to our conceptions, but really all One in God.

And some resemblance of this mystery of the simple Unity of God exists in our nature. Although the human faculties are but the endowments of a complex structure, and may be lost or taken away, and our whole nature dissolvable into the parts of which it is composed, yet we cannot distinguish our faculties from our substance, nor our substance from the power that sustains it. In the soul's life the will dominates the whole being, concentrating every energy in the one purpose. Our immaterial being, though endowed with manifold diversified faculties, is thus ever tending to unity. We move, think, act, love, desire, as with a concentrated life, all energies gathered up in the oneness of our personality; and as we grow onwards to perfection our nature approaches more and more nearly to unity, becomes more one with itself, and more one with God. Our body partakes of the same mysterious property. In our bodily frame there is a central unity of life. If the extremity of a nerve be touched the thrill runs along the chord, and is felt instantly in the innermost seat of nervous matter; or if the centre of the system be affected, the painful sensation is felt in the utmost extremity. We are each, as it were, a world, turning on its own centre, an individual seat of self-acting force, by a centralising power drawing all into ourselves, that we may again give forth ourselves in all; if true, that all may be one in God, if false to our vocation, that self may be all in all.

Observe further how in the creation of man his future heavenly condition in a state of pure virginity dedicated

to God alone was set forth as the primary law of life. When our Lord revealed man's intended perfectness in his glorified body He said; "In the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."¹ He thus indicated the final design to be accomplished when the full number of the elect are gathered in. While it is said of the rest of the animate creatures simply that they were made in pairs,—“Male and female created He them,”—man at first was made single, as alone having a personal existence, and as expressive of the unity of his race. He was thus living a single virgin life, when “the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.” He was in this state when the first commandment was given, and when he put forth his attribute of superior sway over the rest of the creatures, receiving their homage and giving to them their names. The first bliss and dignity of his Paraisaical condition was shed on a virgin life. It was a further expression of the Mind of God in the creation of man, when the eternal Voice spake again and said; “It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.” He needed a companionship to fulfil the Divine purpose in the extension of his race, and for its perfect development. In furtherance of this purpose Divine Wisdom had planned a blessed union in purest love, and in this further act of creative power God so ordered this sacred union that it might be for ever afterwards a sacramental image of the future perfect union with Himself, which had been intended from the beginning. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he

¹ S. Matth. xxii. 30.

slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the LORD GOD had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man."¹

God thus gave to the virgin state a pre-eminent dignity, setting it forth as the expression of His first thought for man, the condition more immediately identified with the Divine Image and Likeness, and though lasting but a brief time as the one law of his existence, yet left as the record of His work to be the type of the glory of that form of humanity which He would Himself assume as His own, and an abiding witness at once of its greatness whenever chosen for the love of God, and sealed by vows expressed or unexpressed as a perpetual offering of devotion, as well as of the perfect purity which ought to reign in the married state, the sacred emblem of the New Creation of God in which Himself shall be the all-sufficient partner and support of every faithful soul, its Spouse, its rest, its sweetness, its endless Joy.

III. The practical points to be borne in mind as suggested by the facts of the Creation may be thus generally stated.

We have seen the intimacy of the connection between our created nature and our Creator. We live

¹ The description of the Creation of Man given in the first chapter of Genesis (v. 27), in which the same term is applied to him as to the rest of the animate kingdom, "male and female created He them," is only a general view of the entire process of the animate creation, as applicable to all in its results, in which man is classed with the rest of the animal races. The second chapter takes up the history of man's creation separately, and in its special details, and there marks its progress in distinct stages, as stated in the text. The first account omits all details, the later supplies the deficiency, and is therefore the more specific and complete account.

only as we are from moment to moment sustained by Him. Moreover, as we consider our interior, higher life, we are inevitably led on to the thought of God; and thus a true understanding of ourselves tends ever to the contemplation of God. We can hardly think of ourselves except as in God. He is felt surrounding, pervading, sustaining, absorbing our personal life. As we cannot long think of time without the thought of eternity arising in the mind; nor of space, without the vision of infinity opening beyond our view—a fact generally allowed in the laws of human thought—even so the view of ourselves calls up at once the vision of God. And as we grow in maturity of spiritual consciousness, we can hardly separate the idea of our own life from that of the Life of God, nor tell how to distinguish between the operations of our own spirit and those of the Spirit of God abiding in us. We are in truth ever living face to face with the Living God. We think, we speak, we act perpetually in this attitude of close relationship towards our Creator. Unless the vision were veiled beyond the possibility of any adequate apprehension of its reality, the overpowering all-absorbing awfulness of the thought would paralyse the powers of life. There would be a suspension of all our faculties in the dread which would possess them. It is only because the surrounding influences of material things are cast between the soul and the invisibly all-sustaining Life of God, as the atmospheric haze tempers the blaze of the sun, that the full play of thought, the unrestrained energies whether of mind or body, can fulfil their appointed earthly ends. But while by this mysterious economy we are enabled to develop our complex powers without fear, even alas!

too fearlessly, two thoughts should be earnestly cherished,—first, that as beings impressed with the image and likeness of God, the details of our lives should be the faithful reflections of His will, the visible expressions of His character; and secondly, that we are, after all our care and study, nothing in ourselves, but only a shadow of His substance, as a ray of light momentarily reflected in the water, as frail if we only look to ourselves, more real, more beautiful, if we are truly His Image cast upon the passing world. Moreover, our creation is not to be viewed as a work finished so that once shaped by His Hand, we are left to circle in our orbits as separated forms of life. Rather we live by a perpetual going forth of creative power, and our souls are but one continued inbreathing of God under the constant pressure of His Hand, while the ever fresh influence of this Spirit Life fixes its stamp from hour to hour manifesting the faithfulness of our obedience.

2. Consider the extent of assurance which our creation gives us as to God's love and care. Consider what even according to a human realisation of the idea, is involved in the fact of a life cast upon another's life as its means of support, that, for instance, of a human infant cast upon a mother—the intensity of her care, the lavishness of devotion with which every instant need is tended, the quick eagerness with which every cry is heard, the ceaseless anxiety with which every change of feature is watched, the vast reach of forethought and self-sacrificing toil which as a deep absorbing joy is expended on the growing development of advancing years. Consider further, the depths of feeling and anxiety ever freshly evoked by the involuntary calls acting upon a mother with no sense of weariness amid ceaseless exactions, or of

disappointment under frequent failures. What is this but the impression of the Mind of God in a fallen state of humanity, in one who has been not the source and author, but the mere instrument in bestowing life! And what does it prove as to the loving-kindness and long-suffering concern which must ever be operating in the Mind of God towards a life which He has awakened out of nothingness, and which He has so constituted in relation to Himself as to rest ceaselessly on His continuous upholding power! What pledges does such an instance of human care give as to the continuous protection, the ceaseless and instant aid, of One Who is more than Father, more than Mother, more even than Creator or Preserver, Who is Himself our very Life! If such be our relation to God, how shameful, how abhorrent to a true view of our state must be any complaining or distrust, or any fearful questioning as to the progress of the events of our life, the conditions under which He has willed our lot to be cast, our destiny accomplished!

3. We must, if we would advance in the spiritual life, be careful not to set limits to the possible development of our nature. We are not, as the inferior creatures are, perfect at our birth, with complete and defined instincts. They advance not beyond their first powers. We are on the contrary cast in a mould pliable and elastic, into which God by a continual action infuses increasing elements of mind and spirit and a growing capacity for receiving ever fresh impressions and new features of the Divine character. We are not as creatures launched forth into space to run a fixed course and develope according to our own inherent energies. Our life is rather a constant going forth of Divine

power impressing and infusing capacities made through His grace worthy to contain His own Presence. We know no limits to our growth but His own predestination of love, and even this is capable of apparently endless increase according to our own desires and our willingness to co-operate with the workings of His Spirit. What a view thus opens before us of the possible intended unfolding of such an existence, out of the germs of our present capacities! What enlargement of hope may grow at the thought of the fulness of God being the only measure which Holy Scripture gives of our renewed nature! What the ever-flowing sea of Divine desire to bless the creation of His love! What must it be to grow through all eternity in His Likeness! But surely as the oil was stayed in the widow's jars, because she had failed to provide vessels adequate to the fulness of the miraculous gift, even so lack of faith and defect of aspirations to correspond with the intended glory destined for us, must be a hindrance to the work of God, and a loss of the measure of the stature of CHRIST which His love had prepared for us to attain.

IV. Moreover it is essential to bear in mind that our increasing development depends on an increasing knowledge of God. As we are formed in His Image, so our growth is but a faithfulness of correspondence with His Image; and such correspondence is the fruit of a true knowledge of His Mind and character, as Holy Scripture affirms when it says, "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST Whom Thou hast sent." Our advancement is coincident with a faithful study of the Mind of God as it is exhibited in the character of JESUS CHRIST.

We are to be the reflex of His sacred Humanity. Whatever of human perfection He manifested may be reproduced in us, and may be gained as it is earnestly sought. So far as we know and imitate Him, so far is our progress in the one true life. Moreover even as God is manifold because of His unity, unlimited as to His perfections because His essence contains or rather is all that is perfect in goodness, and life in Him is a boundless, endless diversity of all possible excellencies; so in us, a reflected image of His unity and perfect life, there is a central force which, if true to the promptings of His indwelling Spirit, may be ever putting forth as out of a prolific storehouse of possibilities fresh faculties and attributes of grace, fresh elements and diversities of character as yet inconceivable to us. Even as we cannot imagine what may be the glory of the new-formed body destined to grow in the day of the resurrection out of the present body of our humiliation, so neither can we foresee what higher and purer forms of spiritual beauty may be called out of the present imperfect conditions of our spiritual life. We only know that we shall see our LORD "as He is," and that when we thus see Him "we shall be like Him," and that He is "the express image of the FATHER," and that in Him "all the Fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily."

V. It is yet another mark of the Image of God within us, that we are, like Him, really, though in a subordinate sense, creators. Even this incommunicable attribute is represented in us. We cannot indeed bring fresh life into existence, but we can mould the life that exists into new forms; nor is there any limit to the exercise of this power over the manifold structures

which are around us, so long as we subject ourselves to the laws ordained for them.

And this power extends itself into the highest regions of life. As the poet or the painter by an inherent creative fancy can raise and fashion out of the infinitely diversified conditions of mind and of material forms and colours, new worlds of thrilling interest and enchanting beauty; as the hand of man, the instrument of his intellect, can adjust to new relations and convert to new uses the forces which pervade and constitute the universe; even so the spiritual world is, under God, subject to our sway. By the power of prayer and energy of action, and force of influence and example, we can change the course of events or the destinies of souls. If we work together with God we can bind the wills and mould the characters of others, and so form new creatures in His sight. By teaching, by guiding, by personal witness we can create new worlds of life to glorify God, to swell the triumph of our LORD. And here is the eventful responsibility attached to our earthly course: here is the mission to which His faithful ones are called in their several degrees. To some the call comes of an entire self-devotion in spiritual service to perpetuate in the Church the work of CHRIST, and fill up what is left behind of His sufferings, of His earthly toil and love—to be as God in this world, centres of spiritual influence, fountains of bliss to the helpless, angels of the covenant of grace, as the eyes, the feet, the hands of the living God, stretching forth into the darkness to fashion and adorn souls which shall arise in the Last Day to call Him Blessed. What must be the joy of those who in that Day, in the gathering of His elect, shall see in the great multitude

whom no man can number, the fruits of their own earnest service, to be owned before God, through His grace, as the very authors and preservers of their life in Him !

By all in their various vocations and several degrees some measure of this blessedness may be ensured. All have some charge, some call to be useful to others, perhaps to the world. All have some capacities, some power of influence often unknown to themselves, while yet, it may be, deeply felt by others. And in those who ever long to be truly CHRIST's, to be one with Him, the love and care of others for His dear sake is a very instinct, a ceaseless thought. And what will be its recompense ? Even "a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple" has its reward. What then will it be to use all opportunities of influence, and usefulness, though it may be in ways apparently feeble and commonplace, if it "be done heartily as unto the Lord," for His sake, to save the souls for whom He died !

IV.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN COVENANT.

THE succeeding Revelation followed after a long interval. God had been known in His Power, His Omnipresence, His Unity, His presiding, overruling Providence. In accordance with the former Revelation, the laws of obedience, and patient endurance; the ordinances of sacrifice and prayer; the consequences of the dependence of a creature on an Omnipotent Creator,—had entered into the mind of man and formed the basis of the religion of the faithful for many centuries.

There came an eventful change in the world's history, when God willed to form for Himself out of the nations a people distinct from all other people, to be a peculiar treasure, to be the recipients of a further Truth, and the instruments of a special grace—to be the select objects of a peculiar care and love, bound to Him, as He to them, by sacred vows and mutual engagements. God entered into covenant with an elect people, and gave promises and enjoined certain laws which formed the bonds and conditions of a distinct religion. The distinctive characteristic of this new order of spiritual relationship with God was, that He became the Head and centre of human society, as in a family union, exhibiting a personal interest in the most private con-

cerns and ordinary transactions of the elect people, guiding and directing them in their daily path by continual manifestations of His will, making known the vocations and destinies of each separate individual, marking by the instant expression of His mind His acceptance or His rejection of their services, and by a wonderful familiarity of affectionate intercourse cherishing between Himself and them a love and trust which when lived in faithfully made their earthly home a second Paradise in the midst of the growing defection and prevalent idolatries of the surrounding nations.


Thus the Patriarchal age in its first and simpler form ran its purer course. But after a period there came a decline. The first glow of faith waxed cold, and the fair promise of covenanted love failed to fulfil its purpose. A forgetfulness of the bonds of the Covenant and of the promises of grace spread during ages of trouble and oppression throughout the elect people, and as they fell into bondage under hard taskmasters in a foreign land, despair sank into the hearts of the Faithful. It was in order to revive their withered hope and restore their decayed life, that God mercifully unfolded the secret grounds on which His Covenant and the fulfilment of its promises rested. The sacred Name, "I AM THAT I AM," was revealed to Moses for this purpose. It was not a new revelation, but a deeper unfolding of what had been already revealed. It was the perfecting of the knowledge of the Covenant. For this Name signifies the Self-existing, the Eternal One. It implied that the Covenant of God was without repentance, because Himself was unchangeable. The Covenant was an expression, an outgoing of His own life. To declare His own ceaseless stability of existence was

to declare the unfailing truth of the virtue of His Covenant ; of what their Fathers had received as the pledge and security of their peculiar privileges. The Covenant was not merely an expression of the Divine Will ; it was an outcoming of the Divine character. The election, the special love, the individualising care, the bond of mutual attachments, which constituted the essence of the Covenant, was the result of dispositions eternally inherent in the Being of God. The falling away of the elect was the feeble variability of the creature, affecting the creature only ; it could produce no corresponding change in the Heart, the Being of the Everlasting God. It would necessarily hinder the effects of the Covenant in themselves—not the outgoings of its grace from Him. The creature might cease to be the same ; but God changes not ; and God must cease to be, ere His promises could fail, or His pledges to His creatures lose their living power. The Covenant existed because He existed. It would be annihilated only if He had ceased to exist.

The Sacred Name involved a farther truth. It implied that as out of the depths of His Fulness of grace the Covenant had been originally given ; so its having been given was the security for yet greater grace to come. God was to be known as the One Living and Life-giving God. It followed that there would be no limits to the possible developments of His love. All things were possible, simply because He lives. The self-existing Fount of inexhaustible life could impart at will fresh treasures ; not only a revival and reconstruction of the broken Covenant, but gifts of grace as yet unknown which lay within the possibilities of its intended scope. The Name of God, not merely the express

terms of the Covenant, was thenceforth to be the interpretation of its purpose, the pledge of its future increase. The unveiling of Himself as the source of life and love, not only ensured the certain deliverance and support of the fearful and despairing in their return to their true allegiance to their God, it tended also to animate the sanguine and the trustful with anticipations of a boundless hope. For His Name is Himself; and Himself is the Fulness of grace to His people, and to have His Name named on oneself is to have the endless assurance of all that God is able to impart, or oneself able to receive. The Covenant opened with the great fact of an election, and choosing and binding to Himself a peculiar people as the object of a special love. It closed with the assurance of its groundwork being laid in His eternal inexhaustible Fulness of Being, out of Which in due time all possibilities of grace would be vouchsafed.

The consequences which flow from the law of a covenant between God and man are therefore of the deepest moment. Herein for the first time came out to view the great verity of the Personality of God. Power, Wisdom, and Beneficence, are stamped on the structure of created things, and breathe in the laws which regulate their movements. The visible Creation sufficiently attested these primary truths. But it implies nothing as to the dispositions existing in the Mind of the Creator towards the creature; nothing as to the intercourse which might subsist between them. A First Cause may be readily assumed in the chainwork of created existences; nor indeed can the human mind without violating instinctive principles which dominate the laws of thought, escape from the necessity of



such a conclusion as the only intelligible explanation of the existence of things. But a First Cause is not ordinarily allowed to be of necessity a Living Person. It may be assumed to be a Fate, or some mysterious essential Power of Life. But even if it be granted that the First Cause of an order of Personal Beings is necessarily in Itself also a Living Person, yet the Primal Source of Life might lie far back in the order of sequences, and be only as a final Resting-place in a vast chainwork of innumerable links of Being, without any immediate influence on creatures far removed from it. But a Covenant unavoidably implies personal intercourse of Being with Being; and such intercourse founded on mutual promises and engagements implies as certainly affections, choices, a capability of loving and being loved. It implies on the part of Him Who binds it, equally as in those who are bound by it, a breathing feeling Heart with all its possibilities of keen sensibility, its manifold claims, and desires, its vivid consciousness of disappointment or gratification. We instinctively identify certain special qualities with a life which exercises itself in loving desires towards others bound by an acknowledged relationship, mutually understood and trusted. These are qualities of a living Person, and imply active personal communion with Beings of a kindred nature.

Moreover this farther Revelation represented God under an aspect that could not fail to touch the human heart, as the previous Revelation did not. The ideas of power or of wisdom, or even of beneficence, are not in themselves attractive. They may call forth reverence, admiration, gratitude. But they are not calculated to excite personal love or attachment. They may even tend

to repel from the consciousness which they produce of a superiority separating by so great a distance the giver and the receiver of the benefit. They afford no necessary opening for community of feeling. Rather they may deter from hope of intercourse because of the implied entire dependence of the object of such condescension. Moreover life has its trials and its burdens equally as its blessings and its gladness. Evil is ever mingled with the good. The difficulties which perplex the heart in viewing this outward visible order of created beings, if unexplained, hinder the going forth of its fervour with any security of confidence towards the author of such a mixed and troubled state : and if God had left Himself shrouded in mysterious silence as to His personal feelings towards His creatures, and no secret clue were given to explain the disorder of our present state, no real foundation could be laid for deep personal attachment or affectionate devotion.

From the very constitution of our nature, which is according to the Mind of God, we are influenced in proportion to the motives which act upon us. We cannot be moved simply by the dictates of our own will, or of a will external to us. We cannot love as a mere act of duty ; nor feel confidence or delight in one of whose dispositions towards us we have no clear impressions. It is equally so whether a fellow-creature or our Creator be the object. We can but feel according to the laws of our nature, and it is one of the many proofs that the God of nature is the God of revelation, that the order in which He has unfolded His Mind, and the appeals He has made to mankind, are so perfectly in accord with the nature that He has made ; that the lines along which His grace has moved harmonise so

truly with our natural dispositions and the laws which regulate their action. God seeks from us no response which is not true to the constitution of our minds. He would draw us onward only by accommodating the order of His dispensations to our capacity of corresponding with their demands.

It was thus a true progress in our spiritual life, as well as a closer fellowship with God, when He awakened and directed towards Himself the strong impulse, ever latent in the human heart, to cast itself on one higher than itself, and cling in fond devotion where it can feel confident at once of tender lovingkindness, and an unfailing protection. The enthusiastic passionate outpourings of devotion which so remarkably characterise the Psalms could not have been elicited, had there been no revelation to exhibit a distinguishing love and personal care on the part of God. Some deeper and more touching appeal than the exhibition of Divine power was needed to reach the springs of such ardent affections. But this deeply stirring influence was supplied when God showed Himself to be One Who had His "delight among the sons of men," and a desire for their fond attachment; when by a distinguishing predilection He gave Himself to them to be their peculiar joy and stay, knitting Himself to them and them to Himself by irreversible promises of mutual delight in each other's love, the Infinite to the finite, the All-holy to the fallen, as though they were equals, having a community of interests and common ground of sympathy. New senses were appealed to; new feelings aroused; and thenceforth the devotional life was characterised by new emotions of loyalty, and passionate gratitude, and self-abandoning devotion to God, as

one's own God. And a personal concern in His honour as oneself sharing His interests, and a freedom of heart in delighted fellowship with One Who in His infinite greatness had yet stooped to one's own level, and associated Himself with one's own objects of pursuit, were now mingled with a restful confidence in His special Providential care.

II. Further, it was then shown how God, while embracing all His creatures in the infinite grasp of His all-sustaining benevolence, could yet in perfect consistency with the Truth of His Nature concentrate Himself on individual lives, as though each alone in itself were the sole object of His Love. This mystery was revealed when He made Himself known as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And as this title was bequeathed to be the common inheritance of each member of the elect people, the idea of the individualising care and love of God became the groundwork of a new phase of religion. As the Creator, God could be viewed only under a general aspect, and man could feel himself only as a part of the universal whole. Each person could feel that he stood towards God in relation to his race, and his race only in relation to other orders of created Being. God could be regarded as embracing all, as Heaven encompasseth the earth, and man could apprehend himself at once as one provided for in the general government of the world, a speck in a boundless universe of life. And this view of himself is indeed to be ever cherished as teaching us our comparative nothingness in a boundless creation, as well as our closeness of relationship with all other creatures, enforcing on the mind the law of kindness, of fellow feeling with even the lowest ranks of animate

beings. And the same law should also prevail as to the higher view of ourselves as members of the Body of CHRIST, that each is at best but as one among many, it may be the least among the Saints, and only the entire communion of the elect "the perfect man" in CHRIST. This view of ourselves is greatly needed to preserve humility, and a sense of fellowship with the "great multitude whom no man can number." But if this were all, we should only feel that we have an interest in general promises, and a share in the common inheritance of Divine love. Such a view would not touch the individual sense, the thrilling consciousness of one's own personal life. It would foster but the comparatively feeble sense of possessing a portion of an universal blessing.

It is indeed impossible for us to understand the individualising faculty in the infinite Mind of the all-embracing Godhead. May it be supposed that a type of this great mystery is to be found in the fact so often observed, that when the minds of large sections of the human race are deeply stirred, while the movement pervades the vast community, it is found concentrated with intensest force in individuals, generally in some one person who becomes the embodiment and the organ of the prevailing idea, and the instrument of its development in the general life of humanity, as, on the other hand, although each individual man is formed in the Image and Likeness of God, the entire race only supplies the full reflection of the features of the Divine character which any single creature is incapable of supplying, and thus the entire race is viewed as we have seen it to be, but as one individual life? Certainly these two great features of the general and the individ-

ualising faculties are found strikingly exhibited in union in collective Humanity. May not their expression in man be regarded as a faint image of the wonderful combination of the universal and the concentrated in the Heart of God, forming the groundwork of the double action of His universal and His particular Providence, of His Love, which at once comprehends all His creatures, and yet embraces with a singular and absorbed affection the several objects of His electing grace? Certainly the special bliss of the Covenant bound about His chosen ones, depends on each person being permitted to appropriate to himself the Eternal Almighty God as his own God, His infinite Love as his own special possession, as though oneself alone were the single choice of His affections, as though one had God all to oneself, and God only concerned with one's own individual interests and desires; as if He had said to one only in this universe, "Thou art all in all to Me," and that one were oneself.

Here we may learn the true remedy for a dangerous tendency which exists in all earnest hearts, dangerous in proportion to the keenness of natural sensibility, and the attractiveness of those whom God has given to be our companions,—the tendency to idolatry, the impulse to find satisfaction for the highest longings of the soul by casting oneself on another's life as the joy and stay of one's own. Such cravings are distinct from the desires which bind us one to another in the different forms of loving friendship, a relationship which God has intended to be the bond of human society, and the occasion of infinite loving charities. What is meant is the turning towards the creature for a response to feelings which were intended to draw us upwards out of *ourselves*, out of the world, to God Himself, and draw-

ing which, if it centres itself on a holy object elevates the whole nature, if on one unholy or unworthy equally degrades it. But it is a drawing which needs to be jealously watched, even if it fastens itself on a holy object, or one thought to be holy, because on that very account it may be suffered to be indulged with the greater security, and because seeking only a spiritual fellowship seems as though it must always remain spiritual. Such a craving may beset a devotional spirit in any state of life. Even in the Religious Life, when the soul is withdrawn from earthly attachments, and acknowledges spiritual bonds alone as its satisfying aim, there may be the exaggeration of one's own need of support and another's power of assistance, and while really yielding to a selfish craving after sympathy, the soul may deceive itself with imagining that God alone is sought in such communion with a fellow-creature. Or if in the sense of the danger of an interference with the love of one's LORD, an effort is made to deny oneself the absorbing self-gratification and suppress the craving, a blank disappointment may shed its depressing influence first within one's own soul, and then by a quick contagion over all the circumstances of the surrounding life. It is often as if one had lost one's all, as if the sweetness and power of one's life were taken away, when the stay on another's life is gone.

And yet it is at once evident that this rest on the creature could never be intended to be the satisfaction of the soul's longings, or the support of its weakness. Though fellowship one with another, and joy in one another's love, is a great portion of the promised bliss of the faithful, as it will be a large ingredient in the glory of the Communion of the Saints, yet it can be at best but a

subordinate exercise of the soul's life, a joy and stay ever dependent as the reflection of a far higher and more stable joy and stay. It were a cruel mockery of the heart's best yearnings to suppose that the satisfaction of those longings were only thus provided for by Him Who made them, when the creature may be separated from his fellow at any moment, even if bound together by the closest and most sacred ties ; when manifold imperfections and uncertainties beset our intercourse with all others, or sudden hindrances may mar all human plans and thwart and disappoint the fondest anticipations of most intimate unions ; or, worse still, unexpected change, or the supposition of change, real or fancied variations of feeling, may cast the veil of doubt or distrust over all outward expressions of love or sympathy. Were any object, subject to such possible intervening obstacles, suffered to form the one absorbing dream of life, the heart of the child of God would be of all things the most unstable, perhaps the most miserable, subject to alternations of anxiety and despair, and tossed by strugglings of vainest fears, even though its love and trust were of the purest kind. The error arises from a false view of life ; it is the permission of a true and unselfish impulse to attain a wrong excess, a failing to preserve a powerful passion in its due subordination to a higher love and more commanding trust, a lavishing on the creature too much of those most precious gifts of the heart's fervours which were intended by the Creator to return in their fulness to Himself, and to embrace others only as in subjection to, and as in union with, Himself.

God's purpose for man in implanting these powerful instincts in his nature was shown clearly in the revela-

tion of His covenanted love. For while a Covenant including all His elect in one common bond implies that there should be a common love binding all together, as all share one hope, one faith, one home in eternity, and therefore also a free fond play of common sympathies drawing each to each according to the force of individual attractions, making the exercise of mutual care and fellowship to occupy a large share in the common life as among members of one body,—yet it is the primary law of the Covenant that God Himself is to be one's own God, and oneself His own chosen one, and that to each one He says; "I am thy God, and thou art My elect, My fair one." The several inheritors of the Covenant are bound together only because they are thus bound to God. This primary law, being the groundwork of the living power of the Covenant, must necessarily overrule all other love and trust, must, if earnestly held, keep at a lower level the love between the chosen creatures themselves, and raise the soul to aspire to the realisation of a restful love and trust in God above all others. We are true to the fundamental law of the Covenant only so far as our heart can say in truth, "I love this one or that one of the elect people of my God with a true pure love; we share the same joy, the same fulness of hope; but I love Him Who loves us both, more firmly, more absorbingly. I lean on this one or on that one, as alike living together under the care and guidance of our God, but I trust, I lean on Him, His tenderness, His guidance, His support, more confidently. I love and rejoice in other's love, but I can turn at once and more joyously to Him Who is the Source and the Fulness of all love. To gain the love, the care of my fellow-crea-

tures, however precious, what is it in comparison of gaining His? To lose the love, the care of my fellow-creatures, what is it in comparison of losing even the least measure of His?" We are safe only as we are jealous of allowing for a moment the law of love and trust to be reversed, to suffer the creature to become the chief, God the subordinate stay; the creature to obtain the larger, God only the lesser possession of the soul's throbbing fulness of affection. Rather as the wonderful truth of God's distinguishing mercy and ceaseless allurements of loving care, is apprehended by the soul, all other love, however dear and sweet, will become as the fleeting earthly forms of beauty bathed in the sunlight, and deriving their chief attraction from the radiance with which they are suffused, while yet we feel that the warmth and splendour of the glorious Light is the true source and sustainer of our joy. Only thus we learn to rejoice in the gift while it is ours; to bear the loss if no longer ours; to feel it pass from ourselves to others without murmuring; to fulfil our course even in loneliness, and yet rejoice because He is still ours, Whose love, more precious than all, knows "no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning."

III. Again, a Covenant implies a freedom of willing choice on the part of the creature equally as on the part of the Creator. The very essence of an engagement by covenant involves a free mutual consent. Grace is wholly dependent on the Will of God. It is purely His free gift; and His grace is the sole ground of the possibility of such intercourse between the Creator and the creature, or of His creatures being endued with the power of freewill to enter into such an engagement. And a Covenant can be formed only by mutual consent

between contracting parties, alike free, alike willing. They are bound to each other by a similar freedom of choice ; the Covenant is sealed and confirmed only as the result of a surrender of each to the other ; and thus far the creature acts even on an equality with his God ; for he is left to his own choice to yield himself or not, to accept or reject this special union which is involved in such a closeness of relation with God.

It is the self-surrendering trust, on the part of the creature, his grateful response to Divine love, that lays so great an obligation upon God, and formed the groundwork of the bold appeals which Holy Scripture so frequently records as the expressions in earlier days of earnest faith in the promises of the Covenant. This is the explanation of the confident pleading with which Moses approached God on behalf of His people, and with so great success, notwithstanding their continual defection. Moses was conscious that by the pledges which God had given of a peculiar care, the promises by which He had bound Himself, He could not refuse the appeal. The truth of God was concerned. His honour would have suffered in the sight of the heathen, if He had allowed His elect, His covenanted people to perish. "Consider that this nation is Thy people." And God admits the force of the appeal. "And He said, My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Then Moses feeling that the gracious words might be understood to apply to himself alone, pleads the case of the people again, and more at length. "And he said unto Him, If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy

people, from all the people that are upon the face of all the earth." And the LORD, yielding to the appeal, because of the bond of the Covenant which His servant thus pleaded, "said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name."¹ And again afterwards the same irresistible plea is urged, that the promise may be the more surely pledged: "O LORD God, destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou hast redeemed through Thy greatness, which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty Hand. Remember Thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin, lest the land whence Thou broughtest us out, say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness: yet they are Thy people, and Thine inheritance which Thou broughtest out by Thy mighty Hand, and Thy stretched out arm."²

It was the peculiar relation in which the people stood towards God, and God towards them, the bond of a distinctive love made openly before the world, and binding on both, even in the fallen state of the people—a claim superadded to that which every living creature has on Him Who made them—which inspired Moses with such boldness and pertinacity of appeal, and invested his prayer with such persuasive power. The whole history of God's dealings with His people Israel, His proneness to forgive, His rejoicing over their repentance, His fervent expressions of personal

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 12—16.

² Deut. ix. 26—29.

interest and love, 'His grief at their unfaithfulness, which fill the pages of His prophets, are the result and the witness, not of their creaturely dependence on Him, but of the everlasting Covenant.

And this claim on God, this wonderful power over Him, depends as we have seen, partly on our own choice. The creature, though living every moment only because God wills him to live, yet has the power of this self-surrender, the possibility of a free choice which, if fixed on God, lays a fresh and most constraining claim on God. He has given the power of this free exercise of the will, of the affections, of the desires, to every soul, and the blessedness of exercising it as if wholly its own, a pure true choice determining its endless destiny, and binding around the Living God the chain of an irresistible appeal which He will surely acknowledge, for it is His own loving Will meeting its intended response. And those who know the blessedness of such a choice, and have a heart set free from all attachments hindering its exercise, are possessed already of the "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

What is thus revealed as the characteristic grace of the Covenant, embracing the whole body of the elect people of God, is true also of the particular covenants of love to which individual souls are drawn by the ties of special vocations, or by self-oblations to which, as they surely trust, they are guided by His Spirit. The same principle applies in all such cases. These private covenants are the inner circles of the one everlasting Covenant, partaking through its fulness of grace of the same Divine Promise. And here therefore is opened a boundless field for the exercise of the devout affections of every faithful person who would live perfectly before

God. The vow of dedication which leads the soul to God, if accepted, binds God also to impart the grace and the protection needed for its fulfilment. And as all designs formed, all services fulfilled, within the sphere of any special covenant, take their character from the spirit in which the act of dedication is made, even so by virtue of the living bond of union which such an act involves, every thought, every intent, if true to the purpose of the dedication, becomes instinct with its spirit, and is transformed into an ever fresh exercise of accepted consecrated love, an ever renewed witness of the power of covenanted grace. Each self-surrender, each free act of loving choice, has a peculiar preciousness of its own; and what our nature experiences in an affection that clings to oneself for one's own sake, and seals the willing choice by irreversible promises, has its counterpart in God, and finds its response in Him, and becomes the groundwork of a new range of happiest, most trustful confidences, of fond ties which wind about the Heart of God, while ever drawing His faithful ones nearer and nearer to Himself.

There are critical periods in life when the effort of self-surrender forms a marked stage in one's spiritual progress. But the grace which animates these efforts is not limited to them. It is cherished by continually renewed offerings; it gives expression to the most ordinary and familiar acts; it may become a habit of mind; it may breathe in ceaseless desires to glorify God in perpetual thanksgivings; it may become a ceaseless consciousness; it meets God, as it were, on His own ground, for as He ever gives forth life and bliss by ceaseless pulsations of grace, even so the chosen favoured object of His priceless love may give back the fruits of His

grace, giving as he receives, retaining nothing for self, possessing nothing but in the firm resolve to re-consecrate His gift in fresh self-oblations to the praise of His holy Name.

Only as we look over the past under this aspect of life can we see our real defects, or understand the true character of our unfaithfulness. Only as we look forward with this same consciousness can we see how to make reparation for a guilty past; for the power of a re-dedication and the renewal of broken promises never fails. It must ever be remembered that the renewal of the Covenant by the hand of Moses, and the proclamation of the great truth of the unchangeableness of its promises, took place at a time of utter despair and degradation. It was during the iron bondage which had eaten into the very heart of the life of Israel, that the full free promises of the Covenant were re-asserted with a generosity of love, and a manifestation of power, unknown till then. This was no doubt recorded to be a perpetual witness of inestimable consolation to every desponding soul, to the most faithless and disobedient, to those who in their first essays have utterly failed, from whom all hope has died away. The history still speaks and says, "Thy sin is not as that of the heathen; it is the rebellion of children, the sacrilege of Priests. The curse of broken vows has aggravated the unfaithfulness. But the Heart of the unchanging and unchangeable God, out of Which first came forth the grace which made thee what thou hast been, is open to thee, beats fondly towards thee as at the first; the same ceaseless grace is ever welling up out of its free, full, predestinating love to satisfy thy utmost need, to refresh, to renew, to restore. Nothing shall be wanting,

even though thou shouldest fail again, even to the 'seventy times seven.' The Eternal is ever full of restorative, as of creative power, and thou art still as ever His own elect; and this unquenchable flow of living grace, which changes not, with its ever reassuring lavishness of Divine love, will accomplish all that has been promised, will develop into yet more abundant gifts, will make thee perfect even as He is perfect, perfect in thy state as He in His, and thy state one with His own, which He shall acknowledge to be part of His glory in the great 'Day of His appearing.'"

May He grant to us ever more and more the willing ear, the responsive love, the generosity of desire, the changeless clinging to His Life-giving Presence, such as He may own and approve, till our LORD shall at last triumph in us, and the full grace of His election be manifested in His own final Revelation of His glory.

V.

REVELATION OF GOD IN THE MOSAIC LAW.

It is necessary to keep in mind the progressive principle of our nature in the formation of a true life. The object of these Instructions is to cherish and strengthen this principle. It may be well therefore to mark the steps up which we are advancing. We have seen that in the Creation God manifested certain primary truths, His Power, His Wisdom, His Providence; and we have traced the main characteristics of life formed under the influence of these truths. It has then been shown how a farther advance was made through the Revelation of the moral character of God revealed in His entering into Covenant with man—that it was thus made known to be a Living Person, capable of loving and being beloved, having a will to choose to attach to Himself by special engagement those whom He has chosen, and looking for the return of responsive attachment; dealing with His creatures on equal terms of personal friendship and community of interests. We have traced some chief ingredients in the character of life flowing from the apprehension of this great truth. The next step of advance depended on a Revelation

accompanied by more awful circumstances, and calculated to produce a greater solemnity and a deeper consciousness of the truth of a real life in God.

The Revelation of God in the Mosaic Law was ushered in with an extraordinary array of signs and wonders. Its special characteristic was that it unveiled the awfulness of the Divine Holiness, in a manner and to a degree never vouchsafed before; and in thus drawing the creature into a profounder view of His mysterious Nature, it needed to be accompanied with all that would impress reverence and holy fear. The solitary grandeur of Mount Sinai, even in its natural aspect, and more especially consecrated as it already was to the imagination of the people by its having been the site of some primeval worship—the thick darkness surrounding the Mount at the time of the Manifestation,—“the thunders and the lightnings, the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud,” “the smoke ascending as the smoke of a furnace,” the whole mass of the “mount quaking greatly,”¹—all these combining influences produced the greatest possible alarm in the minds of the people—“all the people that were in the camp trembled.”

These appalling signs and wonders were intended only to prepare the way for the Revelation of God. It was not their purpose to produce terror, and drive His people from Him, as was shown at the time by the exceeding care taken at the command of God to “set bounds about the mount, lest any should break through to come up unto the LORD, lest He break forth upon them.”² And the Revelation itself was replete with renewed promises of love, and reiterated blessing and visions of future glory, that would exalt the people far

¹ *Exod. xix. 16—18.*

² *Exod. xix. 23, 24.*

more than ever above all people. But the purpose of these terrific outward signs was to bring His covenanted people more truly to Himself by subduing the natural mind which was at enmity with Him; to work humility; to remove the self-created obstacles standing in the way of a full creaturely dependence on Himself, and thus make them capable of responding to His more perfect work of love, better able in the silent stillness of reverential awe to look deeper into the maladies of their own hearts which had been the real stumbling-blocks to faith, and at the same time to apprehend more perfectly the Nature of Him with Whom they had to do, against Whom they had rebelled through lack of knowledge, even to the uttermost verge of despair.

To produce "silence in the heart, that thought might do her part," that the whole attention of the soul might be fixed on God; to abase the pride of the creature through a sense of the irresistible Will of Almighty Power; to open their eyes to see more clearly what was involved in provoking His displeasure,—that their mind absorbed in a deeper consciousness of His true greatness and their own helplessness, might be able to receive the knowledge of the truth,—this was undoubtedly the merciful purpose hidden beneath these mysterious visitations of the terrors of God. The exceeding tenderness of His covenanted mercy, and the freedom of affectionate intercourse which it had encouraged were calculated to induce laxity of discipline and an imperfect appreciation of the reverential care needed in all intercourse with God. The special predilection which He had shown in making the Israelites His peculiar people, tended to generate a needless trust which reacted in the deterioration of the moral sense, and the

loss of a loyal concern for God's honour. Love itself had thus become a snare through the prevailing selfishness of our nature, and men failing to appreciate the purposes of God in thus condescending to their needs, themselves sank in their loss of the consciousness of what was due to Him. The remedy for this decay of spiritual life was but another form of mercy. A yet deeper Revelation was vouchsafed, calculated to raise the mind by the power of the living Truth, to see God more as He will be seen in Heaven Itself. For the first and most prevailing thought of the Saints, as they look on God, is His Holiness. The first strain of the hymn which rises around His throne in the ecstasies of grateful praise, is stirred by the realisation of this all-pervading characteristic of the Divine nature. "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD Almighty,"¹ is the first accent of triumphant adoration in which the Saints perfect praise. It is not that Love is less seen in Heaven, but only that it has become to the perception of the creature a portion of a yet greater Truth. Though Love is the law of heavenly life, and God Himself is essential Love, yet when rightly seen in the light of the fulness of the Divine Nature, it is but an outflowing of a yet deeper principle. If it be permissible to illustrate the inexpressible by earthly images, love is what the sweetness is to the loveliness of the flower, or as the hues in which the Fount of Light unfolds itself. Love is an expression of holiness, a smile upon the Countenance of God, the glowing of His Sacred Heart. But to see God truly we must needs rise beyond even this wondrous feature of His character, and look into the sources out of which all Perfection flows, and Holi-

¹ Rev. iv. 8.

ness combines in itself all the attributes of His moral Being.

There are three degrees of advance in this Revelation,—one, the lowest, given orally and in manifold minute details; the other two, more advanced, setting forth the higher truth in mystery and secret signs, and recorded for the encouragement of the more spiritually-minded whom the Spirit of the Living God might lead on, as they become capable of responding to His callings.

I. The object of the first, the lowest stage of the Revelation, was to quicken the conscience that it might discern between good and evil, and acquire a keen perception of sin. "The Law," as S. Paul, speaking of this aspect of it, declares, "entered, that the offence" (i.e. the consciousness of the offence) "might abound."¹ And again, "The Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners."² And again, "The Law is not of faith."³ It had no power to raise the soul into the Invisible, that it might commune with the inner mysteries of the Divine Nature. "The man that doeth them, shall live in them."⁴ The object of the Law was to infuse a holy fear, and a penitential searching of the depths of the heart. It was so ordained that by a constant moral pressure acting on the soul at all points, it might constrain the whole man unconsciously into conformity with the eternal law of righteousness in habitual obedience. On this account it was that the Law entered with such minuteness into the details of the daily routine of life,

¹ Rom. v. 20.

² 1 Tim. i. 9.

³ Gal. iii. 12.

⁴ Gal. iii. 12.

matters even of common food and clothing, domestic arrangements, family discipline, manual labours,—thus bringing continually to bear the principle of submission, and drawing the sharpest, strongest line between the Will of God and the impulses of the creature.

Then again in equal minuteness were given the precepts of ritual, not only regarding the consecration of places and of persons, but also of vessels and of vestments, regulating even the texture of the garments and the composition of the incense, and every detail of every ceremony, surrounding every circumstance connected with the Presence, and the operations of the invisible God, with a wholly unprecedented array of minute ordinances, the very slightest breach of which was visited with the severest chastisement. This department of the Law was manifestly intended to fill the mind of the people with deepest reverence in approaching the Divine Presence, as the code of moral commandments was intended to impress them with a sense of the awfulness of the Divine character. Both combined to produce an instructive habitual sense of the Holiness of God, to cherish the consciousness of the severer side of His Majesty as the Almighty Judge.

II. Still the Law of commandments had but narrow limits in teaching the principles of eternal righteousness. And necessarily so, because enactments adapted to human things must always fall short of the principles from which they are deduced; and moreover the engrossing care about details of obedience, however pure and true, has no tendency to promote the culture of a heavenly and contemplative piety. It deals with facts, not with the inner realities from which those facts derive their form. It is complete for practice,

but unsatisfying to the higher aims of the spirit. Therefore it was that the Revelation contained advancing heights up which the more enlightened and meditative, before whose eyes the HOLY SPIRIT willed to unveil the mystery of the Mind of the Lawgiver, might mount upwards. There were features of the Mind of God which men even while in the flesh might behold through the light of the Spirit, the contemplation of which raises the soul above the Law of ordinances, and enables it to see some measure of the principles of Holiness in their perfectness. And this higher and more mysterious manifestation was unfolded in different measures, exhibited in what have been termed the second and third degrees of the Revelation. It was impossible but that the Law, so "holy, and just, and good,"¹ and the sanctity of the Tabernacle containing "the patterns of heavenly things," should of themselves excite in many aspirations after a more perfect vision of the Nature of God; that the expression of His Mind in human precepts and ceremonial ordinances should awaken feelings never wholly suppressed within the soul, tending to soar above the outward and the visible. Partly then to meet an existing desire, partly to stimulate it when dormant, the mercy of God provided in the Mosaic dispensation further stages of advance.

III. The second stage of advance was exhibited in a typical representation which took place during the delivery of the Law. It was when the Voice spake and said unto Moses; "Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off."² These representatives

¹ Rom. vii. 12.

² Exod. xxiv. 1.

of the covenanted people were withdrawn from the rest of their brethren on the Mount within the veil of light in which God was proclaiming His will; "and they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His Feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of Heaven in its clearness,"¹—a vision substantial enough to be apprehended by human sense, but seen rather by the inward spirit than by the bodily eye. It was an unveiling of the inner depths of Holiness, out of which had issued the commandments and the ordinances then taking the shape of human enactments and material forms; an unveiling of essential Love and Righteousness. They saw beyond the Law into the Heart of the Lawgiver; saw the spiritual interpretation of symbols; the "heavenly things themselves," the patterns of which their hands were handling. They saw the inner principles and groundwork of moral truth, and in that sapphire radiance, as they gazed on the vision of God, "they did eat and drink,"—a sacred ratification of the beatific union, a mystical sign of repose and spiritual joy, even to the full satisfaction of the hungering and thirsting of the enkindled soul.

The vision was intended to give to all the elect people of God the idea of a peaceful rest in the perception of eternal Purity and Holiness, of being so raised in spiritual taste and apprehension as to be able to look on perfect sanctity without fear, and even to feed on it with intensest joy and peace as the fulfilment of the deepest and most urgent longings of the soul. It met the wants of a state of mind at all times within the reach of the children of the Covenant, whom the Spirit of Holiness, working through outward forms and ordi-

¹ Exod. xxiv. 10.

nances, might in after ages lead onward into more secret mysteries; who having fed upon the patterns of heavenly things would go forth into the infinite, seeking eternal principles of righteousness and love in the essential Nature of the Life-giving God.

IV. The yet more advanced, the third and last stage of the Revelation, was vouchsafed to Moses alone. Not however that the wonderful vision vouchsafed to the great Prophet is to be regarded as a mere personal gift, limited to his sole gaze, but rather that he was set forth as a type of the more highly favoured seers of the chosen race, who "hunger and thirst" to behold before the time some measure of the innermost Glory, the ineffable Beauty which clothes everlasting Love. Nor yet that the same Vision in its actual manifestation was to be renewed, nor necessarily the same features of the Divine character unveiled, but insights variable according to the dispositions and capacities of individual souls, lights such as gleam forth out of the mist on mountain tops, or on the deep seas, sudden and fleeting, but leaving on the mind ineffaceable memories of gladness and beauty indescribable in words, nor capable of being realised even in definite ideas.

It can hardly be doubted that this distinguishing grace vouchsafed to Moses was intended as a witness to all in whom similar yearnings might be stirred; proving for all after time the possible advance of Divine knowledge within the scope of the Revelation; that as the exalted aspirations of Moses were recorded as an example of a fervent faith, so the answer to his prayer might live for ever as the encouragement to a like fervour. For Moses was only gradually drawn on to desire this further more intimate vision of the

Nature of God. It awoke first after he had tasted the readiness of God to listen to his earnest petitions for special guidance in the momentous charge committed to him,—“And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name.” It was then he rose to a greater desire. “And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” The thought that God had so quickly responded to his aspirations, and would be surely with him guiding him in his whole after course, led him to venture on the expression of the deeper longing to behold the fulness of the Beatific vision, that, if it were possible, he might see Him Who thus condescended to be present with him, as though he were already “out of the body.” And though this could not be, yet the desire of love was accepted, and a faint anticipation of that final Bliss, under a veil tempering it to mortal sight, was the gracious response to the daring aspirations of faith. “And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name” (the visible manifestation) “of the LORD before thee.” But with the merciful promise came its necessary limitation. “And He said, Thou canst not see My Face, for there shall no man see Me and live.” It was not God Himself, Whom no creature can look upon, in His innermost essence of Being; nor yet His Face, the Fulness of His Glory, as He will be revealed at last to Beatified Spirits in Heaven, but a veiled Form of the Perfections of His moral nature, the eternal majesty of Truth and Beneficence, of Patience and Mercifulness. “And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a Rock, and it shall come to pass while My glory passeth

by, that I will put thee in a clift of the Rock, and will cover thee with Mine Hand, and thou shalt see My back parts, but My Face shall not be seen." "And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the LORD." "And the LORD passed by him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."¹

The results of this mysterious vision did not pass, though the vision itself could be but for a moment. The Prophet had seen himself, the depths of his own unworthiness, unveiled in the light before which he sank prostrate. "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." And the light suffused his soul, transforming for a while even his bodily substance, and was so far lasting in its effects, that the traces of the glory that had shone upon him became to the world an imperishable witness of what prayer may win for the heirs of promise. "And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him."² It was the visible testimony of God lingering on the outward form and speaking of an inward communion from which lower natures shrink, but which had raised the faithful Prophet in the sight of the people into a sublimer circle of Divine knowledge and sanctity, which, as he grew in humility and meekness through the keener sense of his unworthiness, drew him more and more from fellowship with the outward

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 17—23 ; xxxiv. 5, 8.

² Exod. xxxiv. 30.

world into a closer walk with God,—into greater loneliness in his relations with his fellow-men, but a communion with the Invisible increasingly filled with heavenly realities. It was the result of the prolonged communion with God in an innermost sanctuary of His Presence preserved uninterruptedly during many days and nights.

It remains to consider the effects intended to be worked into the soul through the influence of this great Revelation. The immediate effect was "the fear of the LORD." Nowhere before do we read the record of such a profound stirring of the heart of man in the Presence of the unapproachable Majesty of God as at the time of the delivery of the Law. It was a new impulse arising from a wholly unexpected manifestation of the awfulness of the Divine Nature. "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off, and they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

It has already been observed that to produce this dread was needful in order to counteract the undue freedom, the unconsciousness of the real nature of the Divine Sanctity, which had grown up from a misconception of the extreme condescension of God in His former dealings with His people; and this necessity appeared from their conduct at this time. For the first effect of the manifestation upon the Mount was merely to awaken curiosity, to draw the people to gaze as at a spectacle, so that an interposition of the Divine mercy was requisite *to shield them from the perilous consequences of their*

irreverent heedlessness. "And the LORD said unto Moses; Go down, charge the people, lest they break through on the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish." And even the Priests shared with the people this unsusceptibility to the real greatness of God. "And let the Priests also which come near the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them."¹ The memory of the convictions which in that hour sank into the heart of Israel, lived on through after ages, becoming an abiding sense of awe. For in the imagery of the Prophets, and the vivid poetry of the Psalms, the dreadful Manifestation of Mount Sinai is recalled again and again, as the groundwork of a deep popular sentiment, giving weight to ceaseless appeals and reiterated warnings. The vision lived as the sustaining force of a strength of character which became a marked feature in the nobler members of their race, lying at the root of the powerful element of zeal which invested with a preternatural grandeur so many of their greater Saints. The return of Elijah to Mount Horeb more than six hundred years after the vision, when sinking despairingly at the supposed failure of his hazardous mission, desiring thus to renew his strength, and rekindle his fervour, is a token of the profound impressions which had been left; the vital force with which the miraculous scene had entered into the minds of the servants of God. It coalesced as a most powerful ingredient with the previous results wrought by the Covenant, deepening love with a reverential awe, and tempering the freedom of trustful intercourse with the keen sense of the fearfulness of the Divine Sanctity. For the hereditary Covenant lived on as the basis of

¹ Exod. xix. 21, 23.

the inner life of the more spiritually minded Israelite, still breathing as of old the rapturous joy of most intimate fellowship and loving union, between God and His chosen, His best beloved, while the awful sense of His sanctity generated by the Revelation of the Law guarded the passionate delight, the sweetness of conscious acceptance, from deteriorating into an irreverent freedom, or a too confident assurance.

There is a tendency in most minds to make too free with God. The sense of His exceeding lovingkindness and beneficence, the long experience of His forbearance and tenderness, of His ceaseless care and sympathy, felt through all periods of trial, often leads men to think too lightly of the faults which offend Him, to be too indulgent in habitual negligences, so as even to become careless as to their prayers, and lax in the observance of the ordinary rules of reverence befitting the Presence of God. Or again, the sweetness and richness of Divine consolations may become a snare, encouraging a softness of manner, a relaxation of self-discipline as to minor details of life. The habitual dwelling on one's privileges, on the many pledges of Divine love, more than on the responsibilities attached to such manifold grace, may blind the soul to the possibility of falling short of the demands of God, or of any change in His dealings after so much indulgence. Thus the conscientiousness about little things which in earlier days had seemed a necessity of life may become less keen, and self-denial a less welcome thought. And by degrees the strength of character may fail, and even the graces which seemed to have been acquired, be eaten into by allowed infirmities, till little is left save the records of efforts which have ceased, and good intentions habitually unfulfilled.

The truest corrective of this perilous tendency is to raise up before the mind the severer side of the character of God, reviving in the conscience the terrors of the Law of Holiness, recalling striking instances of the judgments which may break forth even in this world, anticipating the day of righteous recompense, and which visit oftentimes the most holy for their more perfect chastening, or as a warning to others, like to the denial of the sight of the holy and beautiful Land to the saintly Lawgiver because of the one momentary incursion of hastiness, a punishment the more painful because of the richer grace and the graver responsibility.

Nor is there a less dangerous proclivity in many minds to levity in religious things. Just as the quick pulses of the nervous system are acted upon by outward excitements, as overstrained sensibilities of the body are apt to become ungovernable, so it is with the soul's secret impulses. Even to those who live under strict rules of silence and recollection, with all the habitual helps and restraints of a secluded state of life, the sudden and variable distractions of outward things, the quick unexpected demands of passing intercourse with others, felt so continually when vigilance is relaxed; when weariness or momentary discomfort or a trifling annoyance has fretted the spirit,—such influences, like troublesome insects settling on the sensitive skin, tend to take off the mind from trains of thought and reflections even of the most solemn cast, even though they had become habitual, so as seemingly to undo in a moment the fruits of long and faithful meditations, dissipating the most precious visions. The soul which had been translated as though before its time, suddenly has sunk and feels itself "earthly,"


perhaps even "sensual," and the heavens become veiled from the unspiritualised sight. And the change may affect the whole manner and tone and look, so as possibly even to cause scandal, or seem at least to bring dishonour upon God, inexpressibly grieving the soul with a depressing sense of shame, and causing at times fearful scruples even to shake the foundations of faith, and cause doubt as to the truth and reality of one's life. There is in consequence of such variability a constant tendency towards the deterioration of the soul's life, diminishing the force of Divine impressions, and weakening the spiritual energies, so as at times to cost an earnest effort to get back into Communion with God. But such a liability is compatible with real goodness, and an habitual devotion, and while an ever careful watch is needed to check the tendency, failings under it ought not to be a cause of over-much sorrow. The variability may be merely the result of the natural play of animal spirits, or the fitful sport of fancy, gifts meant to gladden life and relieve its pressure, as the sunshine lights up even the most rugged and monotonous scenes. Or it may arise from the unavoidable accommodation to the frequent calls of necessary business, or of pleasure, as needful in their seasons. All are subject to such influences, though differently according to the degree of equableness of temperament or steadiness of disposition. Even in the calmest and most carefully ordered life there ever remain risks to be run in our ceaseless intercourse with the outward world, nor were it good to be freed from such influences. They are wisely ordered, not only as suitable to our present transitory state, but as opportunities of a continual and universal self-discipline which follows those

who are exempted from exceptional trials, and which remain even to the most saintly after the graver practical questions of external righteousness have been solved, to be dealt with as the turning-points on which depend the marring or the perfecting of the higher aims of spirituality.

The more advanced stages of the Revelation we are considering supply the remedy for this ceaseless liability to sin. No mere rule or definite precept can ever be a sufficient protection. The danger is so constant, the temptation so sudden, natural infirmity acts so quickly and so strongly, that the mind is scarcely capable of recurring with sufficient security and readiness to ordinary safeguards. Our safety under such risks wholly depends on the force of an underlying consciousness of an ever-present God surrounded and sustained by an habitual sense of the dreadfulness of eternal things. Nothing but a mind practised in the contemplation of the majesty of the All-Holy God, can preserve the soul from the inconsistencies to which in its best estate it must be ever liable. The growing power of recollectedness, fostered by a continual recurrence to the vision of His ineffable sanctity ever inwardly revealed, can alone save the most faithful from continual faults, and grievous downfalls. God alone is able to sustain the soul tossed on the evershifting tidal wave of earthly things, and a God unthought of in the individual life is as though there were no God. But on the other hand there is not in the spiritual world a more touching or a more beautifully attractive sight, or one more significant of inward power, than a happy playfulness, a genial freedom of manners, apt and ready to respond to every call, and enter into every passing

phase of changeful intercourse, while the countenance, the tone of voice, the whole manner, bespeak an undercurrent of lofty thought, a solemn apprehension of what is due in everything to the Almighty God, and the sustained consistency of a life hidden in Him. And this most beautiful state of spirituality is won by submitting oneself cheerfully and habitually to the law of daily trial involved in the common order of the world. It grows and deepens as the soul becomes impressed with the Holiness of God, substantially filled with It, stayed in the consciousness of It, till It become a thought, a feeling, an instinct, which ceases not, and which, whether we move or sleep, or wake, whether we eat or drink, we may ever carry about with us throughout life's changeful scene.

It is moreover a special effect of this Revelation to work in the conscience the sense of sin. The feeling of remorse after the breach of natural or revealed law, is indeed the result of an instinctive consciousness, inherent in the soul of man from his creation; but it is clear that this faculty needs to be quickened and informed. The conscience, like other faculties, is continually liable to be dulled, and to have its action narrowed to the contracted range of particular points of conduct, dependent on accidental circumstances, and varieties of outward influence. The extremely partial and uncertain operation of conscience shown among different nations of the heathen world is a sufficient proof of this fact in man's history. These phenomena are no evidence of the accidental or derived nature of the faculty itself. They rather prove its universal existence in our nature; its presence everywhere under



all conceivable conditions of humanity. They only show that its operation is dependent on variable external influences, and that it is not sufficient to itself. The uncertainty and feebleness of conscience only prove the need of a Revelation from Him Who made it, in order both to guide its dictates, and to educate its powers. Up to the time of the Revelation of the Law the conscience had been left to itself, as it is now among nations beyond the sphere of Revelation, and yet even then it had powerful effects; "when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."¹ Uninstructed and unsustained by the Word of God, the conscience, ever acting indeed, yet gave but a feeble and imperfect witness to the Law of Holiness. The Revelation of Mount Sinai was the commencement of a system of Divine instruction, searching and probing the heart in all its movements and in its innermost recesses and consciousness, and being perfected by the fuller light of the Gospel, as the Spirit of Holiness reveals it to the heart, has been ever since fulfilling the eventful work of convincing man of the full extent of his unrighteousness before God, inbreathing through its ceaseless action the gift of a broken and contrite spirit.

Nor is this all; aspirations after a higher holiness and the pure liberty of the children of God, grow out of these incipient workings of contrition. They are a rebound from the oppressive convictions of the power

¹ Rom. ii. 14.

of sin. The soul longing to be delivered from the taint which it has learnt to loathe, is impressed with the certainty that nothing short of the very contrary virtue in an active exercise of its power can set the inner life free and unembarrassed. The Law has both an active and a passive influence, penetrating the soul under the weight of its judgments, and at the same time elevating it by the stimulus of the perception of a purity and righteousness within its reach, and intended to be the law of its true development, though requiring all possible efforts to be attained, but if not attained becoming its condemnation and its shame.

It is to be observed, that there are marked degrees in the growth of this consciousness of sin to be worked through the influence of this Revelation, corresponding with the different stages which have been shown to exist in the growth of the consciousness of the Holiness of God. Three such degrees of increase in Holiness were pointed out, the two latter being considered rather as different stages in the same line of spiritual apprehension rather than as distinct specific ideas; and similarly there are three degrees in the conviction of sin, the two latter being varieties of advance in the same line of spirituality rather than specific differences of moral discernment.

The first step in the apprehension of sin is the conviction of evil in some definite act, or word, or thought. "I had not known sin," (i.e. that this particular impulse of nature was sin,) says S. Paul, "except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet."¹ It is the particular positive commandment informing the soul as to the nature of desire, which the Apostle declares to have

¹ Rom. vii. 7.

been to his own consciousness a fresh awakening of the power of conscience. What he adduces as an instance of the new light thus dawning in his soul might be applied with equal force to the whole series of precepts both in the earlier and later law of commandments. Ordinarily commencing with a consciousness of some one act of grievous sin, the newly-awakened sense spreads, and by degrees extends throughout all external expressions of the life, penetrating deeper and deeper into the most secret transgressions of temper, thought, or feeling. Or perhaps the first impression stirred by the conviction of some wrong done against some fellow-creature, whether intentionally or not, some breach of the law of love or relative duty, passes on, according to a subtle principle of spiritual sympathy, to a sense of sin against one's own higher nature, or further still against the relations existing between one's soul and God. To the conscience once thus stirred, if kept in active exercise through the study of the Word of God, and the HOLY SPIRIT's light vouchsafed to a careful self-searching, the perceptive power develops more and more, taking in an ever widening range, and a minuter view of the application to one's own personal life of the entire law of precepts and ordinances in which, by means of human forms and earthly relations, Eternal Righteousness has unfolded the Beautiful and the True existing as Laws of Life in its own essential substance.

But the working of the conscience rises to a yet higher range of perception when the soul passing beyond the study of the commandments of God, aspires to know God as He is in Himself, to look upon the very sources in the Divine Attributes out of which

Law proceeds—to see through the Spirit the very Mind of God, and to live not merely in obedience to rules, but as Moses learnt to form the Tabernacle, by the very vision of the “Pattern shown to him in the Mount,” longing to be not merely “subject to the law of God,” but transformed into His very Likeness through partaking of the Divine Nature, to be one with Him in Righteousness, because being of the same mind, one in the very spirit of His Life.

It is a yet further advance in the heavenly life, it implies a deeper insight into the character of the Holiness which informs and directs the most exalted of God’s spiritual creatures, when the soul seeks not merely to live in the vision of the Mind of God and in conformity with His Will, but also to see and fulfil what is most for His glory, what sacrifice, what surrender of self would further His interests and promote His honour, what suffering or loss would best “fill up” some measure of what He hath “left behind” for His Church to accomplish, to carry on in the world the perfect will of Love, through the manifestation of which in Himself and by His grace in His elect, the Everlasting SON would for ever glorify the FATHER Who sent Him. The highest law of holiness is revealed and fulfilled in CHRIST; He came to “fulfil the Law.” He has left the example of His Life as the interpretation of its Fulness. It is as the Spirit reveals CHRIST to the illuminated soul, that the perfect knowledge of the Law of God is vouchsafed, the principles of the Divine Nature embodied in the regenerate soul, the created life thus learning to fulfil the purpose of God in its daily course of love, of untiring ministrations, of patient endurance, of purest sanctity of thought and word.

Thus at once the love of the Covenant of grace, and the awfulness of the Divine Holiness, meet in CHRIST, and are revealed in Him in one transcendent vision of spiritual glory, the love of the SON towards the FATHER and of the FATHER towards the SON forming the groundwork of the Covenant, in which man becomes united with God, the sanctity of CHRIST being the expression in Human Form of the unapproachable Holiness, before which enthroned in Heaven the Angels and Archangels veil their faces in adoring fear. It is as the two combine in our view of the truth, and in our transformed lives,—the consciousness of the All-holy Majesty of God and of His perfect love in JESUS CHRIST coalescing—that the due effects of the Revelation of God in Holiness are fulfilled, and the covenanted child of Divine mercy lives in the true apprehension of the greatness of Him Who has condescended to enfold him in His Bosom, and fill him with blessing. To rise to this apprehension, even as oneself is apprehended of God, is to live and walk in the Fulness of the Presence of God in this life, and to be growing meet for the Communion of those who “cease not day and night before the Throne, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come.”

VI.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN PROPHECY.

THE Revelation which followed next in order after the Revelation from Mount Sinai, was given, not at any one particular crisis, but by a gradual increase extending itself over many centuries. It differed in this respect from all preceding Revelations. The Patriarchal Covenant was a definite communication from God, sealed to the Father of the Faithful in its fulness, and traditionally handed down from generation to generation as it had been originally given. In like manner the Moral and Ceremonial Law, the code of commandments, of Sacrifice and Ritual, came forth from God completely formed, a definite and entire system, admitting no change or development, to be religiously observed in the strictest fidelity to its first enactments. In both cases alike the life imparted and the promises ensured, depended on a faithful adherence to the original deposit, and a careful observance of the conditions ordained from the beginning.

An entirely different mode of influence characterized the Revelation by Prophecy. Prophets succeeded Prophets through the advancing ages, first being themselves the recipients, and then made the channels to others of the increasing developments of the opening Mind of

GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT thus continually seeking by ever-renewed communications of truth to advance the progressive growth of the spiritual life of the people. This Revelation never professed to be a complete and definite system; on the contrary, its very essence consisted in its incompleteness and indefiniteness. It was always directing the mind to something beyond itself. The effect of the Mosaic dispensation had been to produce a constant tendency to dwell on the past, its power of revival consisting in a return to its original principles, and the re-quickening of a sense of obligation founded on the memory of the terrors of the first giving of the Law. On this retrospective view of the dispensation the one hope of the Restorers of pure Jewish life rested. On the other hand the power of the Revelation by Prophecy depended on its perpetual progress; on the opening out of new vistas of thought, ever quickening and feeding hope; on its suggestions of fresh aims and new possibilities of knowledge and spiritual attainment. It kept the mind active and intent on the future, continually enlarging its powers and its scope, as the vision grew with more and more of the inner purposes of the Mind of God, and accompanied by the deepening confidence that there was a world of life yet hidden beyond the horizon of present thought, a yet brighter heaven, a yet purer atmosphere, in which a new life might grow to perfectness of union with God. The Revelation by Prophecy was thus suggestive, capable of continual advance, its influence depending, not on the memory of what had been given or done, but on the anticipations of the unknown, and the realisation of the unseen.

The principle of the Revelation by Prophecy re-

sembled what God had brought into operation in His first creation of man, as the means of preparing him through converse with the outer visible order of things for his intended home in the Invisible.

The following facts experienced in our consciousness will illustrate what is here meant. It is a law of nature that we cannot as yet apprehend the Infinite. We can only conceive space indefinitely extended. As we try to think of the Infinite we find ourselves only imagining space beyond space, or space endlessly enlarging itself. We can never form an idea which will place us beyond a limit such as we first perceive by the senses. At most the mind, straining itself in the endeavour to comprehend what is beyond such a limit, is lost in a vague misty feeling of indefiniteness. As far as any clear mental idea is concerned, it is as though there existed no such state as Infinitude. But yet all the while the mind is instinctively conscious that beyond the bounds of space there is a state which is boundless, not subject to any limitation; and the straining of the mind in the desire to apprehend it with the instinctive certainty of its existence, is a proof of its reality, as clear as the consciousness of life is the proof of the existence of life. We are drawn on to the furthest bounds of imaginable space, and then look forth expectantly beyond, though we always fail in the endeavour to grasp it. There is, that is to say, involved in the very idea of growing space a perpetual prophecy of a further illimitable distance, now inconceivable, but which will hereafter clearly unfold itself to our mental apprehension, and which is constantly creating ever-renewed desire for its realisation.

It is the same with regard to eternity. We cannot

with our utmost efforts conceive more than indefinite time. We can prolong the series of times—thousands upon thousands, millions upon millions. There is by means of ingenious mental processes of numeration no limit to the power of accumulating numbers of days or years, till the mind becomes bewildered by its own calculations. But yet we cannot in the very slightest degree pass beyond the idea of time, that is, of limited extension. Our powers of thought and imagination are bounded about by the fetters of time equally as by those of space. But the mind feels the fetters, and is instinctively moved to strain its gaze into what it knows to be beyond and around, which yet after all its efforts it acknowledges to be inconceivable. And as hope is thus fed by the force of its instinctive confidence, that hereafter “time shall be no more,” the soul rises to a more exalted estimate of its destiny and intended greatness, and is drawn to live within this narrow verge of time with an elevating consciousness of capacities which only eternity can satisfy.

There is in both cases a perpetually acting prophecy, the effect of which is to kindle hope and thus ennoble the mind, filling it with awe in the sense of its own possible greatness, and feeding it with boundless though indistinct images,—the more boundless because of their indistinctness,—of what its future state may be, and what the sphere, now unimaginable, in which the energies of its perfect life will develop their fullest powers. Such prophetic instincts planted in our nature from the beginning, and more or less vividly influencing all human souls, evidently mark a Divine purpose in training man under his natural condition, and according to natural laws, for a life beyond this visible circle of time and space.

It is in a similar way that naturally we learn what may be known of God. We are led on to the apprehension of this greatest of mysteries by a gradual unfolding of ideas which are progressively suggestive of thought beyond thought, and leaving on the mind further anticipations of what as yet it feels to be beyond its power to conceive, while yet instinctively conscious of its certainty. We conceive the moral attributes of Benignity, Truth, Love, Long-suffering, Power, as necessarily inherent in One Who made and preserves this visible Creation. We further feel that such qualities can only exist in a Person ; or being instinctively conscious of our own personality, we become assured that the Creator of a personal being must Himself also be possessed of Personality. We realise a Personal God shadowed out under similar conditions of life in ourselves, confident of His Existence, though we see Him not. As our view of moral qualities and the laws of holiness advances, while conscious of their imperfections in our own nature, we feel that such attributes must needs exist without such imperfections. And as moreover the ideas of Infiniteness and Eternity attach themselves to the great moral attributes which we feel to be in God, the vision grows, and yet as it grows, it ever seems to recede before us, its awful mystery increasing in proportion as our spiritual apprehension enlarges and is purified. As the attributes of God assume grander dimensions before our growing spiritual sense, so our idea of God advances also ; and the more the imperfection of all created things becomes impressed on us, the more the certainty grows of the greatness of Him in Whom no imperfection can abide. As these convictions strengthen, we increasingly feel that we are but trembling on the verge of the incon-

ceivable, while the longing grows for the possession of a Wisdom and a Love and a Beauty beyond all conceivable Wisdom, and Love, and Beauty,—a Glory of which all that imagination conceives is but the faintest shadow. And thus while we feed on what we are enabled to see or conceive of goodness and of holiness, we are imperceptibly gaining an actual knowledge of the Mind of God, and so of the Living God Himself.

There has thus ever been a Prophetic dispensation operating on the mind of man in the growth of thought, both in regard to the outer world, and to Him Who created it. What we are now contemplating is a distinct Revelation founded on this principle, by which the true Israelites were led on beyond the scope of the Mosaic Law. They had a fixed body of truth in the Law, but, by the inspiration of the long line of the Prophets, they were continually receiving intimations of a further truth hidden within the written Word of God, to be wholly revealed in the fulness of time. The complex system of ordinances contained in the Law, was shown, through the utterances of the Prophets, to express and symbolise invisible qualities to be embraced by faith as the groundwork of a diviner life. Their understandings being thus illuminated, as they pondered the outward forms of the Mosaic system, they grew insensibly in the power of apprehending mysteries of a higher order of life, and the anticipations thus awakened told of yet further manifestations of the power and love of God.

Thus, for instance, through the institution of sacrifice, the offering of "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean for the purifying of the flesh," they were prepared for the true Atonement by a more acceptable Victim, the

animal sacrifices bespeaking their own inadequacy, and yet being a sure witness of an expiation for sin to be wrought through suffering and death. The very imperfection of the visible appointment led on the mind, enkindled by the light of the Spirit, to a certain conviction of the approach of a perfect satisfaction for all human guilt. In the same manner the sense of a present cleansing and relief from ceremonial uncleanness suggested to the spiritually-minded the need of a yet deeper purity, and a belief in a power of justification reaching to the conscience. Thus again the feeding on the victim's flesh which perished, as the fruit of the sacrifice and the pledge of acceptance after healing the breach of the broken law, told of the reconciliation to be worked out through partaking of a higher nature, the becoming of one flesh with the source and substance of eternal life, in peace and joy, untasted as yet, and incapable of being understood, but sure at last to come, and to satiate all the cravings of the soul which the imperfect external ordinance created without satisfying.

It was the same in respect to the great mystery of the Incarnation. The Israelites during the times of the Law were visited from time to time by heavenly Beings in human form, whether of Angels, or of One of the Persons of the Ever Blessed Trinity. They were passing visions, quickly retiring into the depths of the invisible world out of which they had suddenly appeared; but they created desires, and fostered hopes, and infused more and more fixedly into the minds of those who were spiritually raised above their fellows,—“the just who were living by faith,”—apprehensions increasingly vivid of a more abiding manifestation in humanity of *the Living God*; the *JEHOVAH* of the Everlasting Cove-

nant. As they saw, or heard of from others who had seen, these floating transient forms, and as the voices of the Prophets spake of the "woman's Seed," of the Child of Bethlehem, who was yet the "Fellow" of the "Lord of Hosts," of "the Everlasting Father,"—the visible signs and the Prophetic utterances combined to create in their minds an abiding truth on which they could rest, feeding boundless hopes, and searchings of heart as to what seemed ever drawing near, and yet was incomprehensible. They lived in an attitude of expectation, their highest aspiration ever reaching forth to what was before and above; and thus thought, imagination, taste, desire, were raised upwards to a blessed sense of companionship, of oneness even in the flesh with what was heavenly, divine; and still the growing faith was ever accompanied with the conviction that what might be conceived was but the faint indication of more that lay beyond in the unapproachable light so clearly veiled from mortal sense, yet sure in the appointed time to be revealed.

It was the same with regard to the coming of the HOLY GHOST. Under the earlier more imperfect dispensation, there were special endowments of spiritual power and inspirations of the highest possible order, though limited to particular chosen individuals, and adapted to special temporary ends. Sublime gifts of grace were then manifested in individuals; and exalted forms of character appearing from time to time preserved a noble ideal of the possibilities of human attainment. But they were fitful and uncertain, and accompanied with infirmities, and flaws of moral consistency, which marked a merely rudimentary state, and were but signs before the time of *something* more perfect yet to come. Ne-

vertheless they created and fostered the conviction of the future glory reserved for the later ages, and fed illimitable desires and hopes of a more abiding Presence, and enlarged gifts, of an all-ruling, all-forming Power of the Spirit of Holiness and Heavenly Light, to become the possession of all the elect. A perfect sanctification, and a fulness of Divine knowledge, must have dwelt as a certain prospect on the soul, though as yet beyond its utmost reach; producing through the influence of its Prophetic anticipations, constant tendencies and efforts after a higher spiritual state.

Thus a new dispensation was at work. It was as though a far distant prospect was spread out before the eyes of the people of God, on which partial fleeting lights were ever gleaming, vanishing as they were caught, but to reappear again and again, and in unexpected quarters, ever stimulating imagination, never fully satisfying it, yet delighting the fond gaze, and leaving on the mind memories and conceptions which became the starting points of fresh creations of thought, and opening worlds of higher realities. There is in our nature a faculty which responds to the mysterious and the indefinite, and which, we can scarcely doubt, is given to us for the very purpose of our being raised and purified by what is above and beyond us. We need dogma, a definite system, on which to rest, to be the palpable stable groundwork of spiritual growth and assurance. And to the many this will generally be the utmost limit of thought and speculation. But there are those who are capable of a further advance, of desires ever eager to be drawn upwards, possessed with conscious powers of rising to live at a higher level of thought, embracing the inner realities of liv-

ing truth, and delighting in the mysterious visionary glimpses of a far greater world. It is not an indifference to truth, or want of simplicity, which dictates such an impulse. The higher world is as substantial and more real than the present. Thoughts which seem to some visionary may be concerned with actual truth, though truth less clearly seen, less openly revealed. Nor are the effects of such more dimly descried objects unpractical or ineffectual in their effect on the interior life. On the contrary, they draw out deeper aspirations, and promote greater purposes. Nobler minds live more by hope than by sight; more by sanguine anticipations than by realised conceptions; by the longings after possible, though uncertain, achievements, rather than by certain and definite results. And the thought of what is possible advances with the growing sense of effort, and the instinctive conviction of the law of indefinite progress as God's ordained purpose for man. There is the consciousness of power, and of a want, though without the clear sight of what lies beyond; but the consciousness is accompanied with the certainty that it is itself a foreshadowing of some hidden purpose, an intimation of His Will, in which the soul is to go forth, "not knowing whither" it is led. The soul is led on through what is mystical, seen as "through a glass darkly," but all the while it feels itself to be grasping substantial truth, and attaining some closer intercourse with the inner life of God. To this faculty the Revelation by Prophecy appeals; and it acts under all dispensations even in our greatest fulness of light; for the Spirit of God is greater than what He has ever revealed; and the soul enlarged by what is already given, becomes the more eager to advance, the joy of its pre-

sent possessions acting as the perpetual incitement to seek yet greater gifts.

It is of the utmost importance to consider how far we are ourselves being influenced by this Divine method of spiritual advancement. Our hope of progress in the higher forms of spiritual life depends mainly on this prophetic power of the soul, and its correspondence with the gradual unveilings of the Mind and Will of God. Whenever we devote ourselves earnestly to God we realise a certain standard of holiness. If we continue true to our purpose, we begin to discipline ourselves, observe certain points of rule, become watchful, are careful in our self-examinations, and the use of appointed sacramental means; and thus gradually we lay in, by the grace of God, as it were, a stock of holiness, very imperfect it may be, but real in proportion as we are true to our religious exercises. There is thus formed within us a treasure of heavenly life, of grace appropriated, elements of a lasting character assimilated to the Mind of God. It is not merely a breathing of the Spirit of God, nor merely a quickening of the conscience by the informing voice of God, nor merely grace floating on the surface of the soul,—of which much ever exists within unappropriated, unemployed, and the existence of which within our reach is a ground of fear in looking forward to our dread account, for grace and the opportunity of using it is as the manna of daily life lying on the ground, not gathered up—but grace used, in proportion as it becomes habitual, is an inherent possession, a part of the very substance of the soul, embodied in our nature. Deeds done, resolutions fulfilled, thoughts transferred into act, *are in truth* our very selves in living action. But to

possess is not to advance; or rather in spiritual life to rest on one's possessions, is to lose, to sink back. As the air is a highly elastic fluid which operates in perpetual pulsations, but in proportion as it is confined and stagnant, losing its healthful play, corrupts and generates hurtful influences; so is it with the life of grace. It is only in the ceaseless pulsations of holy impulses and desires of progress that it lives, only by inward efforts does it maintain its true influence within the soul. We may rest for a moment in the thankful consciousness of having gained a long desired advance, to thank God and take courage; but, if such joyous rest is prolonged, we become conscious of the rising up of the promptings of the human spirit, the subtle insinuations of self, and at once we are fallen; or even if we are able for a while to hold our ground, we feel that the Spirit is passing by and leaving us to ourselves with its purposes to be fulfilled by others, its capabilities of an advancing glory wasted, to become our self-condemnation and our shame. It is only as we see that there is yet more beyond, and our eyes and with our eyes our hearts are bent forwards, and the sight is quickened, and the desire grows in fervour, and we cherish earnestly the thought of "grace for" (or upon) "grace," as the law of our renewed life, height beyond height, that we feel the healthful play of a power within us nobler than ourselves, greater than this world, and the exercise of which is the only true and sufficient rest. And however far we may advance, every gain, every fresh act of self-discipline, is accompanied with the conviction of a further insight into the ways of God, and a further effort to be made, an intimation from above, which is at once the seal of the acceptance

of the present, and the earnest of a future gift. It is the standing on the Mount with the roll of Prophecy unfolding fresh pages of its endless mystery, as the soul embraces the glad vision of its future growth, its limitless progress in union with the life of God.

It follows then from this that to lay down for oneself a fixed measure of grace, a certain definite standard to be attained, is to fall short of the purpose of God, of our intended fulness. It would be as the sun going down at noonday. The power of the efforts we make will depend greatly on the view we take of the purposes of God and of our own future. True effort depends on the realisation of the whole Will of God bearing the soul onward, not of a single aim or desire to be accomplished in us. To feel the pressure of an infinite law of progress; of an indefinite tendency to advance; of a power willing to propel us onward to perfection, to make us to be what yet we cannot know, and to commit oneself to this illimitable force trustfully in faith desiring to be all that God wills one to be—this consciousness must needs be instinct with far greater strength than the resolve for some one spiritual gain, the endurance of some particular trial, the overcoming some particular fault. It is true that we mostly succeed better by fixing on definite points of advance, even to the exclusion for the time of all other aims; and at all times definiteness as to our immediate objects of attainment is necessary in order to be practical and real; but what is meant is this—that behind all particular efforts, as their support and strength, there needs the propelling influence of the full acceptance of a boundless destiny to do all the Will of God, to ad-

vance ever onward—that the particular aims and definite points of advance should ever be viewed simply as steps in an indefinite progress. The limited effort, to be successful even for the special end in view at the moment, needs the whole weight of the infinite purpose of God, of the sense of His entire Will bearing on the soul, embracing the whole unknown future with its endless claims, equally with this special call to a particular act of faithfulness. An effort instinct with the earnest desire for the perfect Will of God to be accomplished in oneself, and in one's sphere of service, cost what risk or sacrifice it may, has necessarily a more powerful stimulus than one limited to a particular aim, as though it were the end of one's course. The one has caught the whole impulse of God's predestinating love, as propelled by the Spirit, "which bloweth where it listeth;" the other is as the stunted flow of the widow's oil, or the staying of the arrow's flight.

This principle of spiritual advancement is involved in the law of special vocations. The sense of a vocation is a belief of God's Will borne in upon the soul as to one's own individual powers and destiny. As it is accepted, the vision deepens, gradually drawing within its influence all views of the future, laying hold of one's whole being, till every thought and feeling penetrated by the impulse, is swallowed up in the conviction that God has revealed Himself, that our future destiny is fixed, and a definite direction given to the exercise of all the onward developments of life. But can we in any degree foreshadow what is involved in the choice? Can we read the writing on the wall in which God has been seen speaking to the soul? Can we interpret the full meaning of the call, or discern anything of the

consequences which must follow the choice? The line along which one's life is to be led may seem to be more or less clearly marked, but the innumerable details which make up a life, and the circumstances to be unfolded as the future opens, are necessarily completely veiled. Only with the sense of a vocation there arises the conviction, that there are in the future great purposes to be fulfilled, and glory to be won, and power given adequate to the need; and one great cause of the fervour and the joy with which the soul yields itself to the vision of its predestined future, consists in the longing to become and to do all that is stored up within the veil of the mystery which shrouds one's onward course, the perfect accomplishment of what God in His love has willed and chosen for oneself. A vocation is in fact God speaking by prophecy. It tells of far more beyond itself, only the interpretation of its dim fore-shadowings awaits the time of their fulfilment. What sacrifices, what searching dispensations of trial, what necessities of discipline and stern conflict, what disappointments and sufferings, equally as what gains, what illuminations in Divine things, what powers of sanctification, what joys and glorious rewards, or where or with whom one's lot may be cast, one's service to be fulfilled,—all such experiences, whether inward or outward features of one's future course, must ever be unknown. But with the Revelation comes the certainty that whatever may be in the onward course, this and this only is the Will of God for oneself, the law of life in which one is to find vent to one's longings, scope for one's powers, and the attainment of one's predestined perfectness. The one act of self-dedication as to the unknown future is fraught with awe because of this

sense of the uncertainty of the actual experience of the greatness of the mystery, which, while it enthrals the soul with the conviction of its unalterable purpose, fills it with the absorbing consciousness that it is of God, to unveil only as He wills the full meaning of His call. And the soul gives itself to the immediate act in the joy of a trustful faith, the more blessed because the future is not one's own, but His, unknown to oneself, but surely ordered in a wisdom and a love which surpass all one's own imaginings, all one's own brightest dreams.¹ Yet further, as a consequence of the principles of life here spoken of, it is necessary to cherish within the soul a readiness to receive the Prophetic intimations of the Truth of God, a listening ear, a pliant mind, a quickness of response to each fresh utterance of the Divine Voice. Of all the beautiful features of the character of Mary, the Mother of God, this we may believe

¹ What the present Dean of St. Paul's says of Dante's devotion of himself to the accomplishment of his great work, is true of every real vocation, and exemplifies in the world of genius what has in the text been said more especially of a Religious Life. "The poet knew not indeed what he was promising, what he was pledging himself to,—in what form his high venture would be realised. But the *Commedia* is the work of no light resolve, and we need not be surprised at finding the resolve and the purpose at the outset of the poet's life. The spell of boyhood is never broken, through the ups and downs of life. His course of thought advances, alters, deepens, but is continuous. From youth to age, from the first glimpse to the perfect work, the same idea abides with him, 'even from the flower till the grape is ripe.' It may assume various changes, an image of beauty, a figure of philosophy, a voice from the other world, a type of heavenly wisdom and joy,—but still it holds in self-imposed and willing thralldom that creative and versatile and tenacious spirit. It was a dream and hope of too deep and strong a mind to fade and come to nought—to be other than the seed of the achievement and crown of life." *Essays and Reviews*, Dante, p. 34.

was the most lovely in the sight of God, because most intimately corresponding with His purposes for her, and the cause of all her advances in her perfect life,—the perpetual watchful aptitude for accepting whatever expressions of the Mind of God reached her. How else, but by the force of such a habit, could it have been that the mysterious Annunciation of her being called to conceive and bear within her womb the Living God, and to give her life to nurture, to tend His growing life, and share all its destinies, was met by the instant response; “Be it unto me even as Thou wilt.” Unless there had been a quenchless infinite longing in her pure soul to know more and more of the Will of God, and the completeness of her dedication to its fulfilment, with a long-disciplined habitual readiness to seize each indication of the unknown future, as it came forth into light out of the hidden mystery, how could she have corresponded with the wonderful grace of God, so suddenly, so unexpectedly revealed?

And this is a necessary law of life to all who would be guided by the dictates of the Mind of God. Would you rise to live wholly to God, would you have your life unfold itself according to His Will, would you advance beyond the present in a course that must lead onward to your predestined perfectness, and your works follow you before God, in “the Day, when He will try every work of what sort it be,” when your endless fate in Eternity must take its form, and inherit its portion according to His sure predestination, then cultivate a pure spiritual intelligence, which the Spirit of God will endue with preternatural keenness of earnest insight, and discipline your will to a ready compliance with all that conscience dictates as the utterances of the Eter-

nal Law of Righteousness and truth, and keep an onward gaze into the opening pages of the unfolding Will of God, with longing desire to know what tends most surely to the furtherance of His glory, and the forwarding of your own perfection. Only thus can the soul advance on its intended course. Only thus can either its true development or its steadfast peace be ensured. Only thus can you follow on in the track which is bright with the footsteps of the Son of Man, and studded with the blessed memories of all His Saints, as they have in their order and degree risen to His call and fastened on it, trusting to the conviction that "He is faithful Who promised," and His ways Righteousness and Peace. And though along this course there may be much that is contrary to early expectations, perhaps in many respects the very reverse of what once formed the fond enchantment of the treasured dream, yet at the last "wisdom shall be justified of all her children," and in the very Face of the Living God will be read the interpretation of the mystery, the meaning of the mystical writing on which the soul often pondered with doubt and fear, but all at last seen to have ministered in appointed order to the most perfect fulfilment of the desired end.

VII.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE INCARNATION.

THE Revelations we have hitherto been considering have related either to God's dealings with His creatures or to His Attributes—the first Revelation relating to His gift of life, the second to His election of a peculiar people, the third Revelation to His Attributes of Justice and Holiness as specially affecting His chosen people, and the fourth to their gradual spiritual advancement through the increase of light and knowledge. In each case the Revelation was external to Himself, confined to His acts of power and love, or to His Moral Properties. The Revelation which comes next in order is that of God Himself in His own Person.

That such a Revelation might be expected would seem to follow as a legitimate consequence of the original design of the creation of man. For man, being formed “in the Image and Likeness” of God, could not find his final rest in anything short of the Presence of Him of Whom he was thus made to be the Representative and the true Resemblance. The reflected *counterpart* would instinctively turn to the Life and *Light* it imaged, not merely to seek expressions of His

Mind, but Himself. Such life as He had mercifully imparted would necessarily yearn to know the Living Source of such mysterious endowments, not merely His outgoings and expressions of love, or the secrets of His Providence, or Predestination of grace; but from the very richness of such subordinate communications the longing would be to know, to rest in His very Nature. The sense of being the imperfect copy of One Whose works and words were replete with such wonders, would be a perpetual incentive to "feel after, if haply it could find" the Perfection Which in faint and partial symbol it represented. We are instinctively drawn to a fellowship with Persons, rather than with things or ideas. Or rather the delighted apprehension of things and ideas leads to the desire to follow the Person in whom or through whom they exist. If we admire or love another's works or sayings, we at once long to know their author. The more we are impressed by another's character, of which we may read or hear, the more we are disposed to seek a personal knowledge; we dwell with delight on the prospect of companionship, of mutual converse. If the person whose works, whose teaching we admire, is departed this life, or beyond our possible reach, we picture to ourselves his form, his very features, and the personal ideal of our imagination lives with us, as though the dead, the absent were present. The imagination rests not till it has found a living picture and clothed it with personal lineaments. This instinct of nature points to an original law impressed by the Hand of Him Who made us, shadowing forth the great truth, that man's rest as to his higher aspirations is only in the Vision of his God; that with such capacities and such cravings as our higher nature owns,

"this" only is "Life Eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent." But such a possession, such knowledge can be at best but gradual, through veils and mystical symbols, by slow approaches, as the lingering dawn of the perfect Day.

It was according to natural order that the Revealer of all previous communications from heaven, should be Himself revealed ; that the same Person of the Blessed Trinity Who had been the Agent in preceding Revelations, should be the One to manifest in visible form the Personal Life of the Godhead. It is an absolute matter of faith that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was more especially concerned in the act of Creation. S. John declares that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Though all Three Blessed Persons were conjointly engaged—for it is an established dogma that all things in the most Holy Trinity are common to all Three Persons, excepting only what is hypostatically proper to each—yet there was some special and distinctive propriety in the derivation of the existence of the creatures from the Second Divine Person. It has also been a traditionary belief of the Church of God that to Him is specially due the Revelations which succeeded—that it was our LORD Who entered into the Covenant with the Patriarchs—that it was He Who appeared to Moses on the Mount—that He also sent the Prophets—equally as it was His Presence, His Sacrifice, and His Communion with His Elect, that formed the substance and grace of the whole typical and ceremonial system of the life of Israel. The Eternal Son of God has been in a special and distinctive manner the Revealer of the Divine works and attributes. He has clothed Himself

and His Mind in veils and symbols, to adumbrate in ways intelligible to His creatures the nature and operations of Him "Whose Name is secret," "dwelling in the Light to which no man can approach." It is also His distinction in the Godhead, so far as there admits distinction in what is common to all the Divine Persons, to reveal to lower natures the individual Personality, the Essential Substance of the Primal Source and Fountain-Head of Life.

We are thus brought face to face with the Mystery of mysteries. The Revelations of the most marvellous love and condescension of God, as well as of the special features of His character, with which His creatures are concerned, had heralded the way. The wonderful series of manifestations, on which we have been dwelling, had always this final end in view, and an intimate connection with it. Even as the instincts of the creature speak of the necessity of rest in the Creator, so the Divine Love which called the creature into being was also drawn to desire and to provide for, as His own rest and satisfaction, the Revelation of Himself to the creature of His Election, to be the adequate end of His purpose to bless.

The Incarnation of God is too vast a subject to be adequately treated of as a section of such a series as is attempted to be here given. A few leading thoughts only can be suggested to indicate the profound depths of mystery which open before us.

I. There was a peculiar fitness in the Son of God becoming Incarnate rather than either of the other Persons of the Godhead. It is not meant that we can explain the cause of this fitness, or attempt to solve all questions arising out of it. But according to the con-

stitution of our nature, we are enabled to gain a greater hold of a revealed truth, if we can connect it with other truths, and see a real relationship existing between them. The discernment of relations and analogies which are consistent with the conclusions of our own mind, is an assurance of the reality of the things thus related, though the things themselves may be beyond the possible reach of our understanding; and the assurance is all the stronger, if such relation exists between the unknown and the known. Thus, for instance, the future punishment of the wicked which seems too awful an idea to be fully accepted, assumes at once a reasonableness scarcely possible to resist, when we conceive how the judgments of the Righteous God fulfil their irresistible course in this life, and also that He Who rules on earth, rules also in the world to come. The mind, if unbiassed by theory or its own disordered wishes, cannot resist the inference of the possible endless extension of judgments, of which it sees the first commencement before its eyes. In all cases alike from the law of association of ideas, and the sense of relative fitness, convictions are formed, and the mind gains firm hold, limited as its faculties may be, of what is in itself infinite and inconceivable. It rests with an instinctive confidence in the idea presented to it, when the truth revealed by divine authority harmonises with what its own sense of relative fitness and its own experience affirm.

In the present case we are tracing a fitness not between things seen and things unseen, or from things lower to things higher, but on the contrary from things even more transcendent, to things which still to us inscrutable, yet come nearer to our apprehension. We *pass downwards* from the law of life existing in the

very Source of Life along the mysterious stream ; from Truths of pure faith to Truths partly of faith, partly of sense ; from regions where the Mystery is wholly unimaginable, to where the Mystery consists in reconciling the union of the Invisible with the Visible, from what Revelation assures us has passed within the pure Godhead to what has passed in the intercourse between the Godhead and the Manhood.

It is an axiom of the Catholic Faith, that the Son of God was the First to proceed out of the Primal Source of Godhead,—First, not in time, for in the Life of God time is not, nor was there either beginning or progress in the Godhead—but as in sequence or order of life, the First to proceed out of the Unity of the Godhead, the First extender, if I may so speak, of the Personal God into a Second Personality. And this first Procession was, as the great divines of old have taught, in the way of the Mind or Intelligence, of Mind from Mind, as the special distinctive organ of communication, so that the Name, “Wisdom” of God, is specially appropriated to the Second Person, or as the Catholic Creed expresses the nature of His derivation by the simple terms, “Light of” or from “Light.” It is again under this distinctive idea of the derivation of the Second Person of the Godhead from the First through the highest features of Life, the Mind or Intelligence, that the SON of GOD is described as the “express Image of the FATHER,” the higher elements of Mind or Intelligence constituting the fullest representation of the One Person in the Other Person ; the mode of the derivation giving to the Person Who thus proceeded forth His characteristic Name. There is then a manifest fitness to be observed, when the creature who had

been made in "the Image and Likeness of God," was to be taken into the Godhead, and this "Image and Likeness" consisted, as we have seen, in his mind and intelligence, that the Person Who assumed this created nature, should be He Who already in His Divine Relations bore this distinctive characteristic, because derived through this same mode of the Intelligence. There was, so to speak, a congeniality between the title He bore as God in relation to the Other Persons of the Godhead, and the title He would bear as Man as the Perfect embodiment of the created "Image and Likeness of God;" the mode of His derivation in His higher nature being the archetype of His reception of the "Image and Likeness" of God through a created intelligence in His inferior nature.

Again, the mode in which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was derived from the FATHER, as distinct from the mode in which the HOLY GHOST was derived from Him, was that of Generation. What may be implied in the life of pure Godhead as to the difference between the Generation or the Procession of a Divine Person—the Procession being proper to the HOLY SPIRIT, as the Generation is proper to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity,—exceeds all possible apprehension of the creature. But, however incomprehensible, the distinction between the modes of derivation of the Two Persons, as represented respectively by these two expressions, is a matter of faith. It is also clear that the title of SON, and so the idea of generation is uniformly appropriated in Holy Scripture to Him, Who being inferior as to His Manhood, was yet coequal with the FATHER, His "Fellow."¹ And as this lower crea-

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.

tion is the reflection of the Being of God—"the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,"—so the law of birth of living progenies from living sires, their lives extending into fresh personalities reproducing themselves after the one original pattern, is a reflection in the world of time and space of the archetypal eternal principle of the Generation of "God of God," and "Light of Light"—and this the more vividly real and true inasmuch as the Generation of the SON, equally as the Procession of the HOLY GHOST, is not one definite and completed act in the past eternity, but a continual ceaseless going forth of Life, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" a Generation and a Procession as truly being accomplished at the present moment, as it was in the beginning, and as it will be for ever and ever.

There was then an evident fitness that He Who was the SON of GOD by Generation, should be the Son of Man by birth; that the Same Person, Who as GOD was derived according to this law, should also assume the nature which knows no other mode of propagation; that He Whose special characteristic in the Godhead was already that of a filial relation, the dependence of a SON on a FATHER, should similarly enter into the peculiar position of a child of a human mother, the offspring of her womb, to be subject to human parents.

We have been speaking as though the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity followed the laws of human life; that the assumption of our nature by the Godhead took its form as the consequence of an existing appointment in the case of humanity. Such is *naturally* the order which presents itself to our

own mind. We rise from the lower to the higher. But the real truth rather is that the law of human generation followed from the pre-existent law of the Divine Generation—that the law of birth in humanity in time was the counterpart of the Eternal Generation of the Godhead within Itself. The Mind which willed the Incarnation willed also the law of human generation, as the means through which the Mystery should be accomplished. He willed to be Incarnate through the prolific action of life within the womb of a human Parent, and in order to its accomplishment He willed the law of generation from Parent to Child as the principle of the extension of human life. Thus the two characteristic Properties of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, His two Generations, have their common analogies, the one in eternity, the other in time, the one in the Infiniteness of His absolute uncreated Essence, the other under the limitations of human infirmity. While we can but know the invisible world in “a glass darkly,” yet the great fact of similar laws of life determining these transcendent mysteries, is a striking evidence of the union that exists between uncreated and created life, and the truth of the resemblances which our own life more especially embodies, though in broken and partial reflections,—but reflections to be contemplated with awful reverence, if we bear in mind that ordinary daily events in human life are setting forth in imagery events that pass within the Substance of the Eternal Godhead.

There is something unspeakably touching in the fact that the bond of union between the two worlds of uncreated and created life, is the Lifegiving God Himself, the One Person Who in both spheres of life

alike is the "Express Image of the FATHER," and Who in both owns the relation of a SON, of a life leaning upon life, of a heart embracing heart, an union thus sealed in the exercise of the purest, tenderest affections, as its means of development and its fruit.

II. The history of God's dealings with man, as witnessed by the Revelations we have been considering, manifests a very marked and mysterious attraction of Divine love in the Uncreated towards the created life, and this expressed most prominently in the Person of the SON of GOD. It is a traditionary belief that before our LORD "was manifest in the flesh," He had revealed Himself to the First-born of created Intelligencies, the various orders of Angels, in a purely spiritual Form as suited to spiritual natures. That this previous manifestation of the SON of GOD had taken place, is believed to be implied in the Name by which He was known before His Incarnation, "the Word of GOD." As the word is the outward expression of the thought, yet still addressed not to the eye but to the mind, so He had been the outward manifestation of GOD to the spirits which were around His Throne in Heaven. It was "the Word that was made Flesh."¹ Nevertheless He was not attracted to the Angels as He was to man. He passed them by in favour of a lower race. "He took not on Him the nature of Angels, but He took the seed of Abraham." The word "took,"² in the original, expresses

¹ S. John i. 14.

² Heb. ii. 16, *ἐπιλαμβάνεται*. "The word is best explained by its use in chapter viii. 9, 'I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt,' and by its use in the Gospels, where it is employed to express the action of our LORD 'in stretching out His Hand to heal the sick and blind,' S. Matth. xiv. 28. So CHRIST comes and takes hold of Human Nature, as it were, by the hand, and delivers it out of the

an ardent intent desire, an energy of purpose in seizing with strong quick grasp a desired object liable to escape or be lost. In the very creation of man the purpose of exalting humanity into oneness with the Godhead was revealed. The Divine Will that man should be made distinctively from all other creatures, in His Image and Likeness, implies this—that man should be the one creature in the whole world who should represent God to the rest of the creatures. And the whole being of man, both his material and his spiritual nature, though in different degrees, was to show forth this “Likeness.” For though, as has been already said, according to the mind of the Fathers of the Church, the “Image and Likeness” of God was in the spirit, not in the flesh—for “God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”—yet it was not possible but that in forming the body of man, so “fearfully and wonderfully made,” so exquisitely designed to be the organ and instrument of mind, and even one with it, the idea of the future “glorious Body” of CHRIST should be present to the Creator’s Mind; or rather the body of the First Adam was purposely framed after the Pattern which from eternity had dwelt in the Mind of God as the clothing and the material instrument of the Humanity of the Son of God. Thus, although in a subordinate sense, the “Image and Likeness” of the Incarnate God was stamped even on the outward features of humanity, and the Hand of the Creator moulded our material framework after the form in which He would Himself in the “fulness of time” walk upon the earth and hold closest converse *grasp* of the devil, and assists and raises it up from bondage, blindness, disease, and death.”—Wordsworth in loco.

with the world of time and space. The very copy of the visible form of our LORD's sacred Humanity was sealed upon our first Parents, to be realised in its perfection only in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, but to live on marred and disfigured through thousands of years as the type of what should hereafter be, and to be at last shared with our LORD by all who through grace are made one with Him.

That this attraction was ever acting on the Mind of the SON of GOD, the drawing of His "delight to be with the sons of men,"¹ to hold close converse with the nature which He was about to assume, was continually evidenced during the ages preceding His Incarnation. It was a belief deeply rooted in the early Church that the mysterious apparitions in human form which oftentimes visited the Israelites of old, even in their worst estate, preserving the links which connected their race with higher worlds, were not angelic or created Beings, but transient visions of the SON of GOD Himself, which, whether substantial forms or not, yet had a real purpose filling the imagination, and cherishing in the mind of man the certainty of His coming in the "fulness of time" to abide in substantial union with man for evermore.

As the time drew near for the fulfilment of this most merciful purpose of GOD towards man, we may surely read the desire of its accomplishment in the overruling Providence, which so shaped the order of events as to bring about the unwonted reign of peace over the whole civilised world, and the union of all kingdoms under one imperial sway, thus rendering possible the gathering together into one Church of all nations and peoples

¹ Prov. viii. 31.

and tongues, and the going forth of the feet of the messengers of "the glad tidings of good things" to all people. And this wonderful manifestation of Divine Love towards our race, has its special attractions to chosen individuals of our race. As we cannot doubt but that there was a special drawing of love towards the One in all the earth who alone was capable of responding to His perfect will, who alone by her faithfulness to grace could unite herself with His purpose to save and bless, alone become the recipient of His Fulness, and out of her pure virginal substance give to Him the elements fitted to form the "body prepared"¹ for Him, even so towards other chosen ones in their degree our LORD is drawn, having a special delight in those who will to become the instruments of His grace, that through them He may take His predestined place among the sons of men, as their King and their LORD, and thus form for His own glory and the glory of His FATHER a race which may truly reflect His Image, and respond to all His love.

This same attraction and drawing to Humanity, as the chosen organ of the manifestation of Himself, is shown in the gracious and wonderful appointment of the Sacramental system, which is intended to supply His outward visible Presence in the Flesh, and convey to His elect the full measure of His grace. He ordained the Priesthood, that men might represent Himself, as Man, in His Mediatorial office and work, and be associated with Himself as His agents, even in things wholly pertaining to the soul,—that His own Humanity as the Depository and Instrument of Grace should be perpetually represented before the world

¹ Heb. x. 5.

through His employment of a human agency, though fallible and utterly unworthy in itself, His Gospel of Truth still a human utterance, His forgiveness of sin assured by the voices of men, His regenerating and renewing Spirit dependent on human co-operation. Men were to be everywhere the shadows and representatives of Himself and His works of Divine mercy. With a like attraction to what is akin to man, when our LORD would form for Himself a veil of His own indwelling Presence, to be with us, to give Himself to us, to make us one with Himself, He chose creatures which form our most familiar sustenance, objects of our daily use, making them the very form and sacramental seal of a wonderful communion. This law of love, thus attracting and attracted, has been in operation in all past ages, and is to continue through all future time till His second coming, love sealed by manifold outward signs, and speaking to men in their own language and meeting them in their daily paths. We cannot measure the height and depth, the length and breadth of such condescending, winning love. Nor can the love of the greatest Saint longing to be His and to have Him all his own, nor the love of Mary to her Divine Son as He grew around her heart in the unfolding mystery of that holy childhood, be more than the faintest shadow of that eternal Love which has thus delighted to manifest Itself to His own elect, and which feels the mysterious satisfaction of an absorbing desire to bless through the mutual communication of natures, Himself through love a partaker of ours, and we through His grace partaking His.

Among the many practical lessons which the Incar-
II.

nation involves the most striking of all, is the profound humility which it exhibits. In considering this or any other special grace in our LORD's character, it must be borne in mind, that it is not meant to imply the existence of a characteristic grace, as in the case of saintly persons certain features of grace are prominent, distinguishing one from another, and giving to each a peculiar and marked individuality. There is necessarily this difference, that in our Blessed LORD all graces are exhibited in their utmost perfection, in their true harmony and proportion; and no single grace can be distinguished as a prominent feature. The true characteristic quality in our LORD is this perfect harmony or balance between the several graces, so that their true interdependence and mutual relations to each other may be learnt, as in no other way, in the study of His Life: but the grace of humility has in our LORD this peculiarity, that it is the one most strikingly contrasted with the Majesty of His Divine Nature, and therefore specially connected with the Mystery of the Incarnation. The idea of humility cannot be applied to the Godhead. It is the one grace of the Christian character which can have no counterpart in Him Who is above all, dwelling in an approachable Majesty. It was only through His coming in the Flesh, and sharing the inferiority of a created nature, that our LORD could find any mode of expression for this quality, and it was on this same account new to the world, incapable of being previously taught because there was as yet no real, practical exemplification of it. While other graces reflecting features of the Divine character, had their rudimentary expressions even in heathen codes of morals, this quality of humility was unknown as a grace even to the elect

people of God. It waited for its true expression, equally for its practical manifestation, till God revealed Himself in a nature capable of it. Humility consists in the perfect abnegation of self, in the death of all that ministers to self, the direct contradiction of all that self would choose for its own sake. This was fully exhibited only in the Incarnation, which remains as a perfect exemplar. It stands out in the world's history as an unapproachable wonder. In becoming incarnate the SON of GOD, in the eyes of His own creatures, apparently ceased to be what He really was. Outwardly and visibly He died to the Godhead, when He as made Man. He voluntarily put aside all that as God He could claim, all that as God He had ever received. He wholly veiled His true Self. It was an infinite self-abasement without parallel, and without a possible rival.

S. Paul, when he would give us a perfect example of this grace, sets forth this mystery of humiliation, as entirely distinct from all subsequent humiliations, contrasting it with the Crucifixion as involving less of sacrifice. "Let this mind be in you which was also in CHRIST JESUS, Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation,"¹ or rather "emptied Himself,"

¹ See Ellicott in loco. *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν*, "emptied Himself," not metaphorically, "humiliavit," Æth., but according to the simple and literal meaning of the word "exinanivit," Vulg.; "inane reddidit," Syr.; "effluere fecit," Copt. Quoting Waterland, Bp. Ellicott further explains, as guarding a possible inference from the strength of the expression; "He had the same essential glory, the same real dignity He ever had, but He emptied Himself of that which He had in the form of GOD, that GOD-like majesty and visible glories which He had from all eternity; *τὴν ἀξίαν κατακρύψας τὴν ἀκρὰν ταπεινοφροσύνην αὐτοῦ*, Theod."

by concealing His Godhead under a nature so inferior, "and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The "emptying" Himself, which characterised His assumption of the inferior nature, is here clearly distinguished from the humiliation of the Cross by the use of the far stronger term. The Incarnation therefore ever stands forth as the most perfect witness of a profound principle, to which all who are in CHRIST must seek to approach.

We cannot indeed be humble as our LORD is humble. We have no sufficient sphere for a similar self-abnegation if we could rival its intensity. We cannot make ourselves "of no reputation," emptying ourselves and becoming, by actual transmutation or surrender of our natural properties, what all men despise, and what is most contrary to all that we are. We cannot become "a worm and no man." We cannot assume characteristics wholly derogatory, and place ourselves in a position perpetually marked by circumstances lowering ourselves in others' eyes. We cannot divest ourselves altogether of what we are, to become what we are not. Saints have sought to follow our LORD even in this His most marvellous condescension by the willing choice of degradations and contempt, very marvellous to contemplate, abiding in such state in some cases even unto death. But they could not divest themselves of the dignity of manhood, and the high position which humanity owns among the other creatures. But still all may walk in the spirit of this rule, which our LORD has for ever sanctified, and endued with the highest distinction as His own chosen sign.

There are callings of God which open the way to acts, and even states of self-surrender and sacrifice of all that the world and the natural self most clings to and esteems, which are very real imitations of the utter humiliation of the Son of God in becoming Man. But if it be the will of God that we abide in our lot, and outwardly make no change, there are daily, almost hourly, opportunities put in our way, in which we may mortify self, and take the lowest place, and bow our hearts to the discipline of neglect, or contempt, or derogatory comparisons, trials which can be rightly borne only in the sense of our nothingness, and the desire to follow CHRIST, even as He came to save us. We can receive such opportunities with a ready will. We can embrace them even with joy and thanksgiving, as the truest "marks of the LORD JESUS." We may thus habitually strike at the root of all our sin, becoming more and more free from the one chief disturber of our peace, the most fatal enemy to restful union with God.

2. Another lesson to be here learnt is love, a responsive love, capable of embracing the love of JESUS. If the ever-blessed Son of God, through the infinite ages, before the world was, could be drawn by free pure love to will to become one with us, our Fellow, to share all our destiny, that we might share His, and taking His place as the perfect ideal and representative of our nature, to make us one with Himself,—and if that design and desire lived on, through the incalculable ages, unchanging, unchangeable, notwithstanding the Fall, and the increasing degeneracy of the Fallen, in spite of the aggravated sin, and growing corruption of our nature, corruption the most abhorrent to His Divine Nature and in direct rebellion against it,—

if bearing with all this and passing it by, He suffered it not for an instant to diminish the long-treasured purpose,—and now in carrying out this desire of self-sacrificing love, having entered within our nature, seeks evermore to individualise His sacred Presence, inbreathing Himself into each separate soul in the all-creative, all-renewing power of the new and perfect life, meeting or rather anticipating the turnings of each, and overcoming by His generous forbearance and inexhaustible resources all the hindrances and reluctances of the fallen, still loving our nature, and forming His Image ever afresh, and rejoicing if His grace find a response in any heart—must not such love as it is appreciated draw forth, though it may be in fear and trembling, a joy and rapture of fervent affections in the consciousness of having found their rest beyond the reach of change, or the possible marrings of disappointed hope? God has so made us that to love is the only true rest of our being. He has so constituted us that in proportion as we rise to a true exercise of our higher powers, and a true estimate of our immortal destiny, we love only what is Beautiful and True, and our fellow-creatures only as we find and know them in God. He has given to love that wonderful breadth which can at once embrace within its folds all that is truly of Him, that no love to what is created, however fond and fervent, need be incompatible with the love of Himself. But should we not love Him above all, and as the primal longing of our souls be drawn more and more to enter into and satiate ourselves in its Fulness?

3. Another thought that is specially suggested by the Mystery of the Incarnation is the sanctity of the

body ; and the need of reverent modesty guarding the flesh, which has become the tabernacle of the indwelling God. It is by a special appropriation that Holy Scripture speaks of the human body as being "for the LORD." He claims it to Himself by a special tie of fellowship. S. Paul condemns the desecration of the body as a sacrilege done to the "Temple" of God. If it be, as is believed, that original sin is propagated by the human body, and thus affects the soul, and that the Body and Blood of CHRIST are the channels of renewing grace through which the whole man is united to God, we see the special force of the expression, that the "Word was made Flesh," as marking that portion of our nature which specially needed to be cleansed and renewed, and also the peculiar guilt and loss that follows bodily impurity.

4. One further thought arises from considering the extent to which the influence of the Mystery of the Incarnation reaches, bringing God into contact with the whole creation, even with the lower creatures of the earth. Can we venture to place a limit to that "deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," for which the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," of which we in our "adoption" are the "first fruits of the Spirit?"¹ Of all the greater saints of the later ages perhaps the one that awakens the most affectionate memory is S. Francis d'Assisi, who, while allowing for much that is strange and fanciful, was surely second to none in an absorbed and self-sacrificed love and imitation of JESUS CHRIST. And his tender and affectionate care of the inferior crea-

¹ Rom. viii. 21—23.

tures, his sense of brotherhood with them, was ever shown in the most touching ways, though often fantastically. This feeling evidently arose in him from a belief and a longing that the glory of the new created life which he sought so ardently for himself in following his LORD, might be shed also in some measure on all other creatures, that all might share in a true communion, the final "redemption" of the ransomed world. It would seem by his example that the ardent love of JESUS, and desire of a perfect imitation of Him, penetrating the soul, would lead, as a natural consequence, as a part of the principle of devotion to the Incarnate God, to this tenderness and lowly association of himself with all forms of created life.

May our Blessed LORD, ever revealing Himself in and by us, as we ever receive Him into ourselves, our souls and bodies, as the Source and Model of all true life, perfect His work in us for our own sake, and the sake of others Whom He wills to bless through us; and may the meditation on this amazing Mystery impel us onward, till we reach the full Manifestation of that perfect vision, which dwelling in the Mind of God from all eternity, was at last revealed in time and will hereafter be seen for ever in unveiled Majesty to be the joy of a perfected creation, as they behold in the "First Born of every creature" the glory of the Invisible God "reconciling all things to Himself."

VIII.

THE REVELATION OF GOD THE SON IN HIS PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION.

THE Revelation which now claims our attention is one which at first sight would appear to be incapable of being reconciled with what naturally we conceive of God; for suffering and death and shame are most alien to our conception of His nature, wholly at variance with His ineffable Majesty and Supreme sway over all things. Yet it is evidently to this Manifestation that our LORD looked forward as the most efficacious of all modes of manifesting Himself to mankind, when He said; "I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," for "this spake He, signifying what death He should die."¹ And indeed experience has always shown the truth of our LORD's words,—that this Revelation is the one of all others which touches the hearts of men, and is the most wonderfully adapted to meet their greatest spiritual needs in their fallen state.

There is a defect pervading equally all the preceding Revelations, namely, that they take no account of sin, or of the alienation which sin with its miserable consequences has caused to exist between God and man. They express the Mind of God in many various aspects,

¹ S. John xii. 32.

and form the groundwork on which the elevation of Humanity in closest union with God was designed. But they assume an uninterrupted freedom of intercourse between God and His creatures, the free gifts of love on the one side, and an equally free correspondence with His love on the other. But what reality can there be in such manifestations, if an insuperable barrier intervenes, shutting out all hope of intercourse between us and God? What avail the richest promises if there exist a ground of separation, the more hopeless in proportion as we see more clearly the greatness of God's Holiness, and the requirements necessary for communion with Him? How are we benefited by the knowledge of the infinite desires of God for perfect union with His elect creatures, or of the boundless possibilities of development for which our nature has been constituted, if we are all the while conscious that He cannot love us, cannot even look on us as we are, that there is in us an evil power which, while it paralyses all our possible efforts to return to Him an answer to His call, is so alien, so hateful to God that He could not, as we feel, without changing His Nature and falsifying His word, fulfil His desires; and even though He condescended to take our nature into Himself for the very end of uniting Himself with us, yet could not, while such alienation lasts, carry into effect this amazing purpose of Divine Love? While we are unable to realise the possibility of the love of God towards us, what can such manifestations of His will and desires be but aggravations of our despair, and fresh inducements to the bitterer self-accusation? It was love beyond all thought to create us out of nothingness, to endue us with natures capable of infinite sensations of affection and of

joy, and to prepare for us a home in Himself, a closeness of fellowship with His own Infinite Bliss. But how could even the love of God devise a means of effecting such vast purposes in a creature so deeply fallen from its proper estate, and so self-condemned and incapacitated by a voluntary degradation? How reconcile Eternal Righteousness with unrighteousness, the all-holy Godhead with the slave of sin and death? Moreover on the part of God, for His own honour and truth, and for the consistency of His righteous government of the world, it was absolutely requisite that He should be just; that the demands of His Holiness and the sanction and claims of His Laws should be maintained; that no creature, however loved, however precious, should be permitted to break in without impunity upon the fixed order of His dispensations, and set at nought the eternal principles of His supreme Rule. How could God be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner? How uphold the laws of Truth and of Justice unshaken, unquestioned, if by the simple exercise of His will and the free act of unmerited benevolence, He should receive back the rebel, forgiving his sin, and removing all the consequences of the transgression of His laws, without penalties endured or compensation offered?

Before God and man could be reconciled, and the Righteousness of His Eternal laws be upheld, two conditions needed to be fulfilled, two requirements met,—one on the part of God to vindicate His Truth, the other on the part of His creature, to remove the hardness of his corruption, and the helplessness of his despair. And it is in its bearings on these necessities that the Revelation of the Passion and Crucifixion of

our LORD has such a momentous weight. The possibility of such a Revelation was shadowed out from the beginning. Two dim instincts planted in our nature, as originally constituted, though incapable of anticipating the merciful intervention of God's infinite compassion, yet served darkly to indicate, during the time of waiting, certain main features of the mystery of the Atonement decreed from the foundation of the world, and still by the analogy they present to this wonderful dispensation of Divine love, they form a ground of assurance and a strong confirmation of the truth when revealed, so that the trembling penitent may read even in his own heart the handwriting of the decree of his deliverance. These instincts which as primary laws of human consciousness extend through all conditions of humanity are, (1) a belief in sacrifice as a means of compensating for transgression and appeasing wrath, and (2) the idea of substitution, enabling one person to suffer and die for another, even the innocent to bear the righteous doom of the guilty. The prevalence of such impressions equally in the savage or the civilised races of the heathen world, is shown in the varied forms of offering, whether of animal life, or of the fruits of the ground, which form so large a part of natural religion, and in the many recorded facts of deliverance during great emergencies, supposed to be wrought through the death of some devoted victim, not seldom of human victims, who have been regarded as accepted substitutes bearing the penalties due to other objects, and expiating the dishonour cast upon the Deity. Natural religions have embodied such beliefs as their chief mystery, learnt apparently from the mere promptings of the uninspired human mind, while in the Mosaic system such prin-

ciples assumed the dignity of Divine ordinances, the long line of sacrificial victims offered day after day in the central Temple of the ancient world foreshadowing the cleansing of the conscience through the Precious Blood of CHRIST, and the transference of the consequences of sin from the sinner to the Lamb of God, "slain from the foundation of the world." Mere uninformed instinct and Divine inspiration met to attest the mysterious and amazing truth of this great law of reconciliation to be worked out in the fulness of time through the compensation of mediatorial sacrifice, the death-pang of a Divine Victim slain not for Himself, but for a lost world. Such impressions engraven on the mind of man were most merciful provisions intended, we cannot doubt, to act as aids to faith, correspondencies of thought subjectively experienced to forecast the truth before it was revealed, and when revealed to remove prejudice; and moreover to further the acceptance of the Divine appointments which otherwise might prove from the very greatness of the love dictating them to be, as they have often been, stumbling-blocks and causes of offence, while yet their acceptance is absolutely essential to our peace, the only available means of our deliverance and restoration to life.

It has often been questioned, what might be the cause which induced God to give Himself to suffering and to death. We cannot doubt that Almighty power and wisdom could devise various means equally suitable for the object proposed; that there is no limit to the possibilities within the reach of the Divine Will in fulfilling the purpose of remedying the Fall, and restoring His creatures. Not indeed that we are to imagine that *we can ever know* all the reasons acting on the Mind of

God, even though Holy Scripture may speak of certain influences at work. There may have been many causes operating, while yet one cause may have predominated. And all Scripture tends to impress the belief that love was specially the moving cause which influenced the Godhead to become the suffering victim for human transgression. There are texts which show the yearnings of love towards objects wholly unconscious of its intense emotions; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee;"¹ and again, towards those wholly unworthy of its deep compassionate tenderness, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee."² There are texts again which speak of the power of love, specially in nerving the soul to overcome the horrors of death and suffering in its desires to bless. "Love is strong as death Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned."³

Such texts indicate, symbolically at least, the secret workings of love in the Heart of God towards His elect in their fallen state, and they evidently express a disposition tending to personal sacrifice even at great cost for the sake of the outcast and the helpless. They

¹ *Isa. xlix. 15.*

² *Hosea xi. 8, 9.*

³ *Cant. viii. 6, 7.*

express before the time in figurative language the simple truth declared by our LORD, while revealing the secret motive that led to His own approaching sufferings and atoning Death ; " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

It is sometimes thought that the love which led to our LORD's Passion and Death was an impulse felt only by our LORD Himself, and that His offering was an interposition on His own part alone, to mitigate the wrath in the Heart of His FATHER, and reconcile the FATHER to the sinner from whom He had been previously alienated. It were indeed impossible to conceive a contrariety of feeling in the Minds of the different Persons of the Blessed Trinity, or that the act of One Person could be at variance with the purpose and will of another Person. Such a contrariety would be wholly incompatible with the Oneness of Nature characterising the Divine Persons, or the perfectness of co-operation which all Scripture attributes to the different Persons in all their relations to the creature. But the crowning testimony against such a belief is that our LORD describes Himself as acting entirely according to the Will of His FATHER ; as in truth following the Will of His FATHER, and obeying it in all the particulars of His submission to sufferings and death. Thus in prophetic utterances He declares what was about to come to pass ; " Lo, I come to do Thy will, O My God ; I am content

¹ S. John iii. 14, 15.

to do it, yea, Thy law is within My heart." And even more expressly in what follows,—speaking evidently of what was the Mind of the FATHER towards man,—He says, "I have not hid Thy Righteousness within My heart; My talk hath been of Thy truth, and of Thy salvation. I have not kept back Thy loving mercy and truth from the great congregation."¹ So, in the holy Gospels, He describes Himself as finding in the love and purpose of the FATHER towards man His support in sustaining His own purpose under the pressure of distress as the time of the Agony approached. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."² "For I came down from Heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the FATHER's Will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."³

An independent, and because incidental, the more persuasive proof of this momentous truth is to be found in the narratives scattered here and there in Holy Scripture expressive of the deep character of a father's love. Abraham's silent suffering in delivering up "his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved,"—Jacob's desolation at the loss of his favourite son, and his reviving of spirit at his return to his bosom,—even David's agony at the tidings of the death of his son, although so unworthy, "O Absalom, my son, my son; would God that I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son!"—all tend to bring prominently forward the love of the Divine Fatherhood, out of which issued every effort to restore the lost, and "bring back His banished

¹ Ps. xl. 7—10.

² S. John iv. 34.

³ S. John vi. 38, 39.

ones," a depth of parental love and earnest desire, which our LORD Himself so touchingly depicted in the Parable of the father's mourning over the Prodigal Son, and yearning to embrace him on his return.

It is clear then that the sufferings on the Cross were not the cause of Divine love towards fallen man, but rather its consequence. Love towards the fallen existed in the Heart of God before the Offering of this amazing Sacrifice. The Sacrifice of the Cross was the effect of love, the design which love had framed in the secret recesses of the Divine Benevolence without regard to the personal sacrifice involved, so that the lost and helpless might be delivered out of the snare in which they were hopelessly perishing. The Cross was in fact the most marked Revelation of Divine Love—the special means by which love, always cherished in the Mind of the Creator, could be most clearly and most touchingly exhibited to the fallen creature,—at once most powerfully effectual in showing how great that love ever was and is, and most influential in acting upon the heart of the fallen creature in penetrating its hardness and rekindling its decayed affections.

One leading object of the Revelation of the Passion and Crucifixion of the Son of God is thus clearly manifest. It meets man on his own ground. It appeals to him on principles to which he instinctively submits. S. Paul is using arguments taken from man's ordinary and universally accepted reasoning, when he says, 'Scarcely would one die for a man, who, though worthy, is no special object of affection or regard to oneself, though perhaps some may be found willing to die for one specially and singularly good *to him.*' "But God hath commended His love to us, in that while we

were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us.”¹ To give oneself to die for another is the crowning testimony of devoted affection, which breaks down all barriers, and goes direct home to the heart with an overpowering appeal which needs no reasoning to enforce. That this sacrifice should have been made for those in open rebellion and wilfully alienated, is a manifestation of love beyond all human experience, and indeed from its very excess of generous unsparing self-abandonment even a difficulty to accept. But when believed, it lays an unanswerable hold on the heart, and constrains all its better affections. To argue in the face of such a manifestation that the Holy God cannot love man as he is, that one’s own special sins are beyond the reach of Divine forgiveness, and irreconcilable with the hope of a return to His favour, can be but the lingerings of the original disbelief, an echo of the lie which Satan first infused into the human heart. As it is true that we needed such love to inspire trust, that “we love Him” only “because He first loved us,” so is it equally true that whatever may be the first inducement to return to God—and such inducements are manifold according to the varieties of disposition or circumstance—none but the love of God in CHRIST can form the bond of a true reconciliation, or really restore the spiritually dead to life. The difficulties which human fear suggests as to the impossibility of Righteousness accommodating Itself to unrighteousness, or of past rebellion being compatible with future peaceful fellowship, or of the insignificance of a creature’s interests excluding him from the con-

¹ Rom. v. 7, 8. The seventh verse is paraphrased in the text in *the hope* of bringing out its meaning, which is somewhat obscured in *our version*. See Wordsworth.

deration of an Infinite God, or of the incapacity of a hardened heart ever to respond to Divine appeals, or of Divine Love ever caring to win the affections of such as oneself, or of very grievous sin being beyond the possible generosity of Divine forgiveness,—these and similar apprehensions hindering the full reception of the Gospel of peace, while they are proof against all other reasoning, yet dissolve and fade away like the mists of the dawning day under the influence of a real and simple belief in this cardinal truth of the love of the Atonement, the unmerited compassion of the Sacrifice of the Precious Blood of God's dear Son, giving Himself according to His FATHER's Will from the pure desire to rescue man from his Fall.

II. Again, the effect of this Revelation was to awaken in man a sense of the real nature of sin, and of the possible extent of the evils which the Fall had introduced into the human heart. Without such a consciousness there could be no groundwork for any adequate contrition, no possibility of a true hatred of sin being roused, or any adequate sense of the deliverance which a recovery from its power involved. But in the Passion of the SON of God the real character and extreme malignity of sin came out to view. In His suffering life it was seen how man's sinful tendencies became more and more inflamed as the Holiness of CHRIST and the true relation of man to God, were through His teaching and example gradually revealed,—how human passion and pride could rise to a diabolical malice as divine mercy stooped to acts of inconceivable condescension,—how human self-interest and worldliness acquired a bitterness and a fury which blinded and maddened the human spirit so as to assert

itself against all threatenings and all pleadings, even to casting God out of His own creation, even were it possible to destroy Him, that itself alone might live, uncontrolled, unchecked, fulfilling in a desperate recklessness its self-chosen course to its own certain ruin. Man was to see in what He willed to endure, in the agonies of suffering which himself wrought upon Him, the real tendencies of sin, the actual possibilities of human selfishness and cruelty. Unless God had thus revealed Himself in a form which exposed Him to the full fury of human passion, to man's unrestrained hatred, content to suffer whatever man willed to work upon Him, we could never have known what we are capable of becoming, or what is the character and power of the sin within us. We could never have conceived from what virulence of alienation from God we needed to be delivered, unless God had thus delivered Himself up to man, to be buffeted, to be spit upon, to be mocked, to be rejected in favour of a murderer, to be condemned to death, to die as a malefactor. Man was to read in the Face of the Crucified, what he could learn nowhere else, the full extent of the evil inherent in his nature. He was there to trace the matured fruits of the seeds of sin lying in his own bosom, in the bosom of every child of man. As we consider the actions of those who wrought that atoning Death, we see what every man in himself alone ever tends to become, would surely actually be, according to the force of circumstances and the power of temptation, unless restrained by grace. We view ourselves too favourably, ignorant of the strength of dormant passion, unconscious how far grace checks hidden tendencies. We ascribe to our own credit what is due to favourable circum-

stances, to freedom from exciting causes, to unaccountable influences cast round about us by the good Providence of God, or the unseen strivings of His all-pervading Spirit. The vail of this perpetual self-illusion is withdrawn on Mount Calvary. In the ungoverned passions there let loose, the naked outgrowth of the original transgression, of the fallen condition of nature which we all alike share, is exposed in an amazing contrast with, and in direct resistance to, all that is most persuasive and most deterring in the sweetness and the majesty of the Divine Victim. It is not to be supposed that this exhibition of the character of sin was the reason for decreeing the Passion of the Son of God. This was but an incidental effect, but it must have been present to the Mind of God, as He designed the offering of Himself. And such knowledge as man can thus acquire only as he places himself beneath the Cross, contemplating the "finished" Sacrifice, was absolutely necessary to awaken, to deepen, to perfect contrition. We can conceive no means which could so completely or so affectingly exhibit to many the full malignity of his fallen state and the power of sin, as the accumulation of shame and agony that the hearts and hands of men like ourselves inflicted on the meek and lowly form of the Ever Blessed Son of God.

III. Again, it was necessary that man should learn to estimate sin, not only according to his own reckoning, but according to the view taken by Almighty God. We need a measure by which we can gauge the virulence of the evil, and the enormity of the inroads which it has made on the order and peace which God had designed for His creatures. But we cannot see beyond a very limited circle. We have no power of calculation beyond

the bounds of our own experience. Moreover the very sinfulness which pervades us hinders the possibility of forming such a judgment. We need to be separate from an object, outside it, in order to form any clear abstract conception of it. As we cannot by any mere consciousness estimate the density of the atmosphere, because the air that forms the atmosphere pervades our whole frame, and thus equalises the pressure within and around us, so that no weight is felt, though the whole burden of the surrounding mass of air presses in on every portion of our body,—thus, in like manner, the sin within us, being of kindred malignity with the sin around us, cannot be measured, or weighed, as a pure angel ever regards it, still less as it is viewed by the All Holy God. He Himself willed to be dealt with as sin deserved to be dealt with, that what He bore, what He became under its burden, might be a measure of its exceeding iniquity in the sight of God — In this sense “He hath made Him to be Sin for us.” He was lifted up in the face of the Creation, to be a spectacle, an object taking the place of sin, as though Himself represented the whole concentrated essence of the creature’s alienation from God; and in this assume identification of Himself with sin, becoming a curse, a thing accursed of God and man alike, He bore the affliction of Soul and Body, His outward wounds, His inward desolation, that He might show what sin deserved, its price, what needed to be paid to buy back the thrall on which it had fastened its hold, and so for a measure by which to estimate its value. As we contemplate the sufferings that penetrated the seat of life of the Incarnate God, prostrating all His energies, and

osing Him to utmost shame in His nakedness, we
in a rule which we can apply to measure "the height,
depth, the length, the breadth," the full hatefulness
the sin of the fallen creature. If we could know the
length of the entire sin that "cumbereth the ground"
any given period of the earth's existence throughout
centuries, we should yet gain no sufficient estimate of
the sin is. No one generation of mankind exhausts
the hateful development of our fallen state, even as no
one nation exhibits all its varied tendencies. Could
we gather all past history into one condensed mass of
evidence as to its extent, the possibilities of the future
would still be left unascertained. Nor if it were pos-
sible to embrace in one view such a dreadful revelation
could we calculate the extent of secret evil. But we
judge of guilt by what is borne in compensation
for it. The relative proportions of crime may be mea-
sured by its penalties. And thus in the inflictions per-
mitted to fall on the Person of CHRIST, as the Repre-
sentative of sin, we measure its true hatefulness in the
eyes of God.

7. It was necessary for another reason that the full
weight of sin should be borne, and exhausted, and this
in a form that would clearly exhibit the completeness
of the Satisfaction. It was necessary in order to satisfy
the instinctive feeling implanted in human nature, that
something as a dark shadow haunts the steps of sin,
reparation for wrong done is an universal law.
It was still more necessary in order to satisfy the
demands of Divine Justice. The conception both of the
justice and of the truth of God would suffer, if sin
could pass unpunished, and be forgiven without the
infliction of any penalties, by a simple exertion of reme-

dial power. There could in such case be no security for law, no trust in eternal Righteousness, no consistency between the character of God and His government of His creatures. But in surrendering His only Son to the Death of the Cross, Almighty God showed by an irrefragable testimony that the judgments which guard the laws of His Kingdom cannot be withdrawn, notwithstanding His decree of mercy to free the sinner from the consequences of his Fall. That the broken law necessitates vengeance, that death is the unalterable sentence upon disobedience, that God changes not, and is as true to the claims of His holiness, as to the dictates of His mercy, was exhibited by the most unquestionable proof in the doom of One for Whose relief a perfect sinlessness and a FATHER's love for His Only-Begotten Son, pleaded in vain. But as the mystery of such a vicarious Satisfaction for sin is apprehended, peace enters the soul. How the substitution of another's life for one's own can be accepted as a sufficient compensation, and be as though oneself had suffered, had died, is among the secret things which belong to God. But it has been shown how our own instinctive consciousness attests this principle, and Christianity is built upon its truth. And as we truly believe that the sinfulness of our nature, and each actual sin, is laid on Him Who has given Himself to be the true scapegoat of Humanity, so we "enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God." And this fulness of rest is realised the more because of the greatness of the love involved in the mystery, when it is remembered that this accepted Atonement depends, not on the sacrifice of the Man Who suffered, giving Himself for His fellow-men, but on the Godhead imparting His Infinite worth to

the acts and sufferings of the Man. For that "no man can deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him," is as true of CHRIST, viewed simply as Man, as of any of His brethren in the flesh. As Man He could only offer what was already due from the creature to the Creator. He could not compensate for another's due. But the infiniteness of the Godhead imparts itself to the acts of the Manhood, and invests the Sacrifice with a merit and a virtue, that extends to all the race, and all its individual members, and to endless ages, imparting to the Precious Blood a power of cleansing that reaches through all time, and beyond time, obliterating the eternal consequences of transgression. And therefore it is that as we embrace not only the self-sacrificing love of the Man, CHRIST JESUS, but also the atoning virtue of the Godhead in Him pervading the sacrifice, as though it were Very God that died, Very God that bore the curse, that we might be free to return to Him, so only is our rest complete, and fear cast out by perfect love. All that sin or death can do against us was exhausted, when the appointed penalty entered into the Heart of a Divine Person, Who deigned to be our Representative, our Substitute; when the curse claimed the condemned nature as its prey in God Himself, and all that was due was by Him borne for us and overcome; and out of the dark struggle the ransomed Life arose to triumph alike in all who should own their fellowship with the Sufferer, and "live no longer to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and rose again," "that He might be the LORD both of the dead and the living."

IX.

THE REVELATION OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WE are come to the last of the series of Revelations through which we have been drawn on gradually to an ever increasing knowledge and fellowship with God. First was revealed life as a simple fact, the laws of pure existence in God; next the covenant relation between God and His chosen creature; then the Holiness of God as the groundwork of sanctity in the creature; further still, the promise of an evergrowing development of grace and knowledge through Prophecy; and lastly came the manifestation of God Himself in the flesh, and this accompanied with the mystery of His submission to suffering as the condition and means of the sinner's reconciliation with God. It may be thought that there could not be a Revelation of God involving a deeper consciousness, or closer union with Himself; nothing that would transcend the being "bone of His Bone, and flesh of His Flesh." But there was a Revelation still to come with yet more wonderful results as to Divine knowledge, and involving a more intimate union between God and His elect creature. To reveal God within the soul by an inward manifestation of Him-

self is more than to reveal Him visibly as a Presence external to oneself. And this was the nature of the Revelation we are now about to consider.

This Mystery will become clearer to our view if we approach it from a yet more distant point, by considering what has passed within the Divine Nature. For what God has wrought in humanity is the counterpart in created life of the movements of the eternal Life within Himself. We trace, as we gaze on what the Catholic Church has ever believed to have taken place within the Godhead, the Archetypal Forms of what Divine Love has willed to accomplish within us His chosen creatures.

The Procession of the HOLY GHOST followed in succession the Generation of the Eternal SON, not as in time, but as a sequence in the order of life. It was from the FATHER as the Primal Fount of Being, through the SON, the First and Only Begotten, that the HOLY GHOST proceeded, both the FATHER and the SON having thus their distinctive parts in the mysterious Emanation of the Third Person. As the SON is the express Image of the FATHER, possessing and reflecting in a separate Personality the Life coequal with the FATHER, so the HOLY SPIRIT, a distinct Personality of coequal glory and of the Same Nature, possesses and reflects the Same infinite Life of Both the First and the Second Persons. In Him Both meet, for He is the Spirit of the FATHER and of the SON, though of the FATHER only as the Fount of Godhead; and thus the HOLY SPIRIT is the Bond of Union between Both, and Their Fulness. What may be the distinctions of derivation between Generation and Procession, which respectively characterise the separate relations to the FATHER of the

SON and the HOLY GHOST, must ever be incomprehensible to the creatures. But it is believed that as the Generation of the SON, as formerly noted, is through the Mind or Intelligence, so the Procession of the HOLY GHOST is through the will or active energies of Divine Love. And this belief is in accordance with the language of Holy Scripture, which so constantly associates the ideas of love and joy with the Presence of the HOLY SPIRIT, these gifts in the creature specially characterising His work in us, as they are characteristic of His own mysterious Emanation. The HOLY SPIRIT moreover is not merely the Bond of Union, but also the development of Perfection within the Divine Substance, carrying the Life of the Godhead to the extremest possible extension of Its exhaustless glory. He is thus spoken of as the Boundary of the Life of God, as though completing the Divine Perfections, or as the Repose of God, or the Term of the mutual energies of the FATHER and the SON, because the Divine Procession knows no further expression of Itself, no further extension of Itself, to effect the Fulness of the Life of God.

I. These ineffable mysteries in the Divine Nature will be seen to have their reflection in the Revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT within the soul of man.

The Revelation was given on the Day of Pentecost to the Apostles, as the First Fruits of the Redemption to be afterwards realised in all who were to be called into their fellowship. And its effects were instantly seen. We may illustrate these effects by three chief signs; (1) by the gift of Divine illumination, which is the "unction of the Holy One;"¹ (2) by love, "shed abroad in our hearts through the HOLY GHOST Which

¹ 1 S. John ii. 20.

is given to us,"¹ and (3) by joy, the next most marked "fruit of the Spirit."²

(1.) Consider how before the Day of Pentecost the Apostles were utterly incapable of understanding any of the great truths which our LORD announced as the very purpose of His Incarnation, His Passion, His Resurrection, His Atonement; or His real Communication of Divine Life to Humanity; or the extension of His grace beyond the range of the people of Israel to all mankind. Consider how even after the Resurrection it was the bare fact only which they apprehended. Their view was limited to what "their eyes looked upon, and their hands handled of the Word of Life." They saw nothing of its consequences, its opening Heaven to the soul risen with CHRIST, its making "all things new," its ensuring the union of man with God. They had as yet no power whatever to look beyond the visible and the sensible. The spiritual aspect of what they saw was still hidden from them. But after the Day of Pentecost how instant was the change! How keen became their understanding! How did the whole retrospect of our LORD's life assume a totally different aspect, every act and word lit up with unearthly light! How did the unseen future spread itself out before their astonished gaze, clear as the day! What an amazing reality invested the steps along which their own life had been led, and the warnings and the encouragements which had been given to them, so dark and unmeaning before! How did the whole scheme of redemption, and the vast operations of atoning love, gradually unfold themselves in their due proportions, and mutual bearings! What gleams of an eternal and

¹ Rom. v. 5.

² Gal. v. 22.

supernatural glory were shed upon their own natures, felt already in its incipient consciousness shining within them !

(2.) And, again, as the knowledge of God given through the Revelation of the Spirit was thus quickened, so did the impulse of joy in God begin, as never before, to elevate and expand the soul of man. Most striking was the change from the alternations of fear and despondency, which had before so often clouded the minds of the Apostles; the contrast with the unutterable depression which had attended any allusions to suffering, the least mention of the cross; the disappointment which had been felt at the loss of the temporal greatness they had imagined, the terror which culminated in the final forsaking at the last crisis of trial. After the Day of Pentecost what gladness of heart was manifested as to their destiny ! What willingness, nay even what rejoicing, to be counted worthy to suffer shame, or loss for the Name of JESUS ! And how steadfastly did this elated buoyancy of joy sustain itself " in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by their own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."¹

(3.) And as in Divine illumination and bright buoyant hopefulness, they ran their after course, so in love towards each other, and towards God, such as never before, since man breathed his first pure life in Eden, had been realised on earth. The immediate result of the preternatural influence of the HOLY GHOST was

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 26—28.

that wonderful manifestation of brotherly love in which the Church of CHRIST laid its first foundations, and the record of which lives through all changes of society to witness to the spirit in which the children of the first Resurrection should seek, though after different modes of mutual care and love, to embody "the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST,"—still bearing in heart the time, when "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart; praising God, and having favour with all the people."¹ The spirit of such brotherly love was to live, though its form was to be changed. It was the first bright dawn on the mountains, before the mists arise from below to cloud the opening day, but a token and a pledge of the glory, which, when the storm has passed, will at last overspread the new creation of God, and gladden the eyes of all who in patience wait for the unclouded vision of God in the perfect love and Communion of His Saints.

II. The Revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT differs from all previous Revelations in this—that it involved no fresh disclosure of the Mind of God. The whole substance of the Truth had been already presented to man in the Person of CHRIST. He was Himself "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "Grace and Truth came by JESUS CHRIST." Nothing could be added to what had thus already passed before the minds of men. "Show us the FATHER, and it suffices us," was the cry of the Apostles. "Hast thou not seen Me, Philip?" was the

¹ Acts ii. 44.

reply. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the FATHER." They were looking, as Philip spake, on the "Fulness of the Godhead bodily" revealed to their eyes. What was wanted was not fresh Truth, but the kindling of the light in which they could see the Truth, the clear opening to their enkindled and illuminated understandings of all that was involved in the Manifestation and work of CHRIST. Man needed the Light of GOD to be shed on the boundless prospect of what hitherto "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive" of what "GOD had prepared for them that love Him," but which is now "revealed unto us by His Spirit." And there was needed also the power to live in the truth, which it is the special work of the HOLY GHOST according to the order and law of Life in the ever Blessed Trinity to impart to the members of CHRIST. The thanksgiving of the soul under the Revelation of the Incarnate GOD is; "Blessed art Thou, O LORD, Who hast shown us Thy glory." The thanksgiving of the soul under the Revelation of GOD the HOLY GHOST is; "Blessed art Thou, O GOD, Who hast in Thy Light enabled us to see Light." The one is the vision of the blind looking on the noonday sun: the other is the vision of those that see, walking in rapture in the perfect Day.

III. Beyond this illumination the yet further result involved in the Revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT, is the enabling us, "leaving the first principles" of life, "to go on unto perfection." What was impossible for man before, except by anticipative grace and in partial instances, became possible now, and this as an abiding state, because the Indwelling Presence of the HOLY SPIRIT is an abiding Gift. This perfecting of humanity is the special

attribute of the HOLY GHOST, even as the Fulness of the Divine Godhead was through Him. As His Procession involved the completeness of the Divine Personalities, the full extension of the Divine Essence, so in the renewed life of man it is His work to impart the fulness of the predestinating grace of God. This great truth had been imaged before in the material creation. After the substance of the earth had been prepared for its present state, it remained "without form and void," till the HOLY SPIRIT began His work. It was when "the SPIRIT of GOD moved upon the face of the waters," that the earth was clothed with life and beauty. According to the same law humanity waited for the outpouring of the HOLY SPIRIT before its materials could be fashioned into the perfect form, and filled with the crowning glory, intended for it. There had been in this, as in all the dealings of God, anticipations of what was to come; lights going before as heralds in the vast procession of the Saints of God; chosen individuals living above their age to foreshow in their partial gifts the future enlightenment of the multitudes who in their several degrees of grace would fill up the measure of the stature of CHRIST in the latter days. But the full and the abiding gift of grace was not yet. Moreover by a prerogative peculiarly her own it was shown what grace could do, in Mary, the Mother of God, enshrining within the pure creature's form all possible virtues pleasing to God, and showing how individual souls might embrace and be embraced by the Lifegiving Spirit, "as He divideth to every one severally as He will." But hers was a special creation of Divine love, and the Saints of Israel were exceptions to the ordinary course of the economy of redemption. The perfecting of

the life of renewed humanity followed the order of life in the Godhead. For as the Fulness of the Divine Life was through the Procession of the HOLY GHOST, so the completeness of the work of GOD in man could not be till His coming. The manifestation of the Spirit must follow the manifestation of the SON of GOD, as His Procession followed the Generation of the SON of GOD. "The HOLY GHOST was not yet given, because JESUS was not yet glorified."¹ He could visit chosen individuals for special ends. He could not impart Himself in His Fulness to humanity at large, nor take up His abode to form a permanent creation through the free development of His power in those whom GOD might call according to His purpose. He needed previously the groundwork of a renewed nature as the sphere of His operations, as the starting point, so to speak, of His activity, and He waited till this need was supplied in the Person of CHRIST. The pure and perfect Humanity of our LORD was the intended basis of His operations. On Him first, as the new and more perfect Adam, the Head of a new Creation, was "the oil of gladness poured forth."² According to the prophecy of Isaiah, "the Spirit rested upon Him"³ in the sevenfold plenitude of grace. And then as a consequence of His Fulness, from and through our LORD the Spirit diffused Himself throughout all His members. The Spirit first incorporates us into the Body of CHRIST, and then He sheds forth on each of us the Fulness which is in CHRIST. Blessed Spirit! Having first been the Bond and Perfectness of the Godhead, He overpasses the bounds of the Divine Nature, and then by an exuberance of Divine love and glorious life He spreads forth beyond into created life,

¹ S. John vii. 39.² Heb. i. 9.³ Isa. xi. 2.

and fills it as it is capable of bearing the weight of Deity and sharing Its Beatitude. By imparting fresh powers He exalts natural gifts, and superadds new elements of continual advancement in the spiritual order, leading on the whole man in each separate individual, expanding and perfecting the higher ingredient in man, "the spirit," now only in an incipient and rudimental state of development, but hereafter to become the predominant constituent part of our threefold nature,¹ till the very beauty, and the whole life of CHRIST is represented in His mystical Body, reflecting through its several members its perfect LORD.

All that has been felt from the first springing of our regenerate life, the kindlings of hope, the visions, the resolve, the sense of power, the openings of heaven, the intimations of the Will of God, growing with our growth, and strengthening themselves in meditative hours, in sweet communion with God,—all that has formed itself into the substantial realities of our higher life, and become the stay, the rest, the delight of our being in its onward mysterious course, the groundwork of steadfast habits and faithful endeavours, and of ever growing prospects of advancing grace, as we gain firmer hold of the unseen world—these are all results of the Revelation of the Blessed Spirit. They are the going forth of the Everlasting in His design to perfect the new Creation to be His "Firstfruits" in the "new Heavens and the new earth." All that we have known of good, all that we shall ever know hereafter, is the developing of the Spirit-life within us, as it is informed, quickened and indwelt by the CHRIST-revealing Spirit of God.

IV. Moreover as within the Divine Nature the HOLY

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

SPIRIT "searches all things, yea, even the deep things of God," so when perfecting the work of Divine love in created life, He searches through and through each hidden recess of the soul, penetrating whatever remains to be cleansed, or what needs to be raised to loftier views, and nobler efforts; or checking and exposing whatever of resistance to the Divine purpose needs to be overcome, what of sluggishness to be quickened, what of irregularity to be subdued; or again, waiting graciously for the soul's own movement to lead its aspirations on to some greater accomplishment, listening to each secret prayer, ever Himself breathing accents of deeper desire, that He may "finish His work in Righteousness." He at one time produces in us an intolerable sense of evil, at another elicits a latent element of good; now stirs the will to co-operate with His onward movement, now unfolds some fresh view of God, or some deeper meaning of His word; or in His inexpressible sweetness touches our fond affections, and causes the heart to thrill with passionate eagerness, or dissolve into tenderest consolations.

Amidst all outer things that pass away, amidst all disquietudes, however keenly felt at the time, are not these movements of the eternal Spirit the substantial realities of life, the things that endure? Is it not for such results as these that "they that are wise" are content to give up this world? Do not these and such like experiences of soul breathe the hope that stretches forward to embrace the Infinite, and which will at last possess the joy of an entire rest in God?

V. There was moreover through this Revelation introduced into humanity the idea and the desire of union,—union through the Oneness of the Spirit of all who share our common nature in its renewed powers. Up

to the time of the coming of the HOLY GHOST this hope was unknown. It was given as an entirely new consciousness. The only true religion in the world, that of Israel, had been most strongly marked by the spirit of exclusiveness. One main ingredient in the hostility which ever threatened our LORD's life, was His purpose to bless the Gentiles. This intense prejudice possessed the Apostles equally as the rest of the chosen nation. Our LORD, reverencing a principle foreordained in the economy of grace, conformed Himself to this prejudice. He spake indeed, as none other could speak, of the power which His own intercession evoked, that would, in the fulfilment of His purpose, make all one, as He and the FATHER are One, "that they may be one in Us." But the actual fulfilment, the realisation of the idea, waited for the Coming of the HOLY GHOST. The source of all union is in the Oneness of the Threefold Personality of God. From thence flows the law of union through the creatures. And the Spirit is, as we have seen, the cause and the Bond of this Primal Union in the Godhead. It is therefore His special attribute to extend or diffuse this same law in created life. And Holy Scripture appropriates it to Him as His distinctive work. He "came upon" Mary, forming within her chaste womb the union next in order to that of the Divine Persons, the Hypostatic Union, or the union of the uncreated and created life in the Person of the Incarnate God.¹ The Same Spirit forms the union, following next in

¹ The word Hypostasis, of which Hypostatic is a derivative, is from the Greek, and is used in Theology to represent "real personal subsistence," and is applied to distinguish the several Persons of the Godhead. As applied to the Incarnation, Hypostatic union means the union of our nature with the Person of the SON of GOD. See Blunt's Theological Dictionary for the meaning of the term.

order, as a consequence of the Hypostatic Union, that which is betwixt CHRIST and His Church,—an union independent of what takes place in individual souls except so far as individuals are taken up and absorbed into it, and themselves form part of it, but independent inasmuch as His union with His Mystical Body admits of change among the individuals who compose it, its own sacred fellowship ever abiding while they who share it may live or fall. Made up of souls, yet liable to change as to separate individual persons, “the Lamb’s Wife,” the Eternal “Bride,” has a mystical individuality of her own, and forms in its composite existence the “perfect Man”¹ in CHRIST, the union of separate souls being so essential and so intimate, that their distinct individualities, though eternally preserved, are yet merged into a mystical unity through the assimilation wrought by the dominant sway of Divine love, even as the Threefold Personalities of God meet in a perfect Unity. This unity of the Church, CHRIST’s Mystical Body, lives now, and it is by partaking of its privileges and its graces that each separate soul lives. We are joined to CHRIST in being joined to His Church, and through this incorporation the merits of the Atonement and the power of the Spirit flow into us. And within this union which binds together all who are in CHRIST, the Same Spirit dwelling in each faithful soul as in “a fountain sealed,” “a holy Temple in the Lord,” forms the innumerable ties which knit separate individuals according to their special vocations and choices to the Heart of JESUS. Such drawings of the Spirit bind some to devoted service whether in society, in domestic duty, and works of the natural order, or in purely spi-

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

ritual things, it may be alone, or in Religious Communities, separate from claims of earth. These are the inner links in which personal affection towards God has its free play, its fond expressions, its concentration of ardent attachment, which our LORD approves when in His own Word He offers Himself as "the Bridegroom," "the Husband" of His elect.

And as there are devotions which bind the soul thus wholly by personal choice to its LORD, covering the whole aim and tenour of the life, so the same law of union with Him includes every separate covenant of closer fellowship for the fulfilment of particular aims; it may be to suffer with Him in some special hardship, to undertake some painful task, to perfect oneself in some particular effort, to make some fresh sacrifice, to bear some humiliation or loss, or whatever may involve a more perfect imitation of our LORD, a truer reflection of His life or His Passion. All such purposes, sealed by special devotion, are the ever fresh materials of union, opportunities of forming fresh ties, and making His yoke the more easy, His burden the lighter, by laying on the soul the sweet bondage of a covenant, the fetters of personal love, that so the soul bound by link within link may be drawn on, joyously fulfilling its own willing choices, towards an ever-advancing perfectness in the blessed consciousness of possessing and being possessed by its God, as the one aim and object of its life. The Spirit Who breathes the desire and the power of union with God, sanctifies equally the devotion of a life, or of its distinct and separate portions.

VI. The main practical lesson which this Revelation suggests relates to the condition of the will. As the complete abnegation of self is, as it was shown, the proper

expression of the life of the Incarnation, so an energetic and submissive will is the truest characteristic of a life acting under the influence of the HOLY GHOST. No one grace can be selected as a distinctive sign of the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, for all graces alike are His work, and therefore equally signs of His Presence. But a will responding to His movements is a condition affecting the formation of every grace, and energy in the will is therefore a sign of active correspondence with the HOLY SPIRIT, whatever may be His special purpose at any moment in the sanctification of the soul. And there would seem to be a peculiar propriety in the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT being exerted on the will of man, if, as was shown to be the Catholic belief, His Procession from the FATHER through the SON is by means of the Will. There would be thus a special relation between the Divine and the human will in Him. His working in man to sanctify him would be most fitly through the agency of the will. As all created life is the effect of the operation of the Will of God, so we may trace the resemblances that exist between the outward and the inward world in this as in other cases. The strong movements of the natural elements in their endless, ceaseless mutual combinations which maintain the order and the splendour of this material world, and which are the outward expressions of the work of the "Spirit of God" as He "moves upon the face of the waters," are the images of His powerful operations within spiritual essences. Our LORD compared His work in His elect to these mighty powers in the outer world, as S. John records the parallel which He drew; "The wind bloweth as it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or

whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."¹ It was by such a force acting voluntarily on His human will that our LORD was "driven by the Spirit into the wilderness." And as influenced by the same powerful energy of purpose, He is described when He "set His Face to go up" to Jerusalem for the accomplishment of His Passion, and His disciples seeing Him were "amazed."² It was as the Prophets had foretold, that "His Face should be set as a flint"³ to meet and overcome by the strength of an enduring purpose the utmost fury of His enemies. These were instances of the energy of Will in which the HOLY SPIRIT was manifesting His Power in humanity. What was thus manifested in the Incarnate God was as an example to all His elect. The same Will of the same Spirit works in each as the moving, propelling, regulating force in all who are truly being conformed to the Mind of God, content to suffer and to toil with JESUS, that "together with Him they may be glorified." Whatever the special aim of the soul at any particular time, the motive force is the same, and according to the amount of its activity is the result, the defeat or the victory. "Not my will, but Thine be done," is, as in the Agony, the turning point of all crises of trial, the secret interpretation of every gain or loss in the spiritual life. Therefore it is that the reluctant will, the will that cannot bear the strain of opposition, or of self-subdual, or is indisposed to effort, yielding readily to natural infirmity, or is soft, or fitful,—is a sure sign of failure. According to the force acting in the will and its tendency to comply with the demand, may at any time be determined the relation that exists between the HOLY SPIRIT and the soul.

¹ S. John iii. 8.

² S. Matth. xix. 25.

³ Isa. l. 7.

Only this one caution is to be borne in mind, that where natural tastes or constitutional aptitudes coincide with the dictates of the Spirit of God, a deduction has to be made proportionate to what is due to mere nature. It is only so far as the action is irrespective of any natural impulse, that it may be regarded as a result and a sign of grace, the greater sign and of the higher grace, as it is more or less above and contrary to nature. And unspeakably blessed are they in whom such an action of the will becomes habitual, all opposing dispositions being subdued, all hindrances as they arise with increasing ease overcome, till at last what is purely of grace becomes a second nature, what was once an effort and a sacrifice becomes a joy, what was once hard the only true rest. Then only may the inmost soul take up the very words which express the Mind of the Blessed SON of GOD, as He contemplated His Incarnation and perfect Sacrifice for the redemption of the world; "A body hast Thou prepared Me,—then said I, lo, I come to do Thy will, O GOD: I am content to do it, yea, Thy law is within My heart."¹ The triumph of the Eternal Spirit is complete, when He makes the chosen of God "willing in the Day of His Power."² It is then that "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST."³ It is the fulfilment of the purpose for which He came from Heaven, in the Fulness of His grace, and the restful peace of the chosen soul responding to the work of God is the fulfilment of His electing love.

It has been said above that the Revelation of the

Ps. xl. 8.

² Ps. cx. 3.

³ Rom. viii. 16.

THE HOLY SPIRIT does not imply the giving of any fresh light, only that the HOLY SPIRIT unfolds the truth which is in CHRIST, giving light to understand, and grace to live in its Fulness. Our LORD said of the HOLY SPIRIT; "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the FATHER hath are Mine, therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."¹ But the respect the coming of the HOLY GHOST involved was entirely new, not indeed as to doctrine, but as to the facts of our nature. The earlier books of Holy Scripture describe humanity as consisting of body and soul. It is not till we turn to the Epistles, in which the HOLY SPIRIT is speaking, that we understand our nature to be threefold—"body, soul, and spirit."² It is difficult in our own consciousness to distinguish between the soul and the spirit; and the spirit, the higher element, is, at the best, but weak in comparison; but to develop within us this higher element, its aspirations, its powers, is the special work of the HOLY SPIRIT. It is as His influence within us unfolds that the true humanity becomes apparent, moral virtues, such as justice, truth, temperance, as-

¹ John xvi. 14.

² Thess. v. 23. It is no exception to this statement that our Lord uses the term, spirit, when He says, that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;" for it had been the frequent usage of Holy Scripture to employ the term, spirit, as synonymous with soul, or as meaning simply the immaterial part of man, without any distinction of its component elements. The difference in the language of St. Paul turns upon the distinction made between soul and spirit, which in the Epistles occurs for the first time, and leads to the conviction expressed in the text, that the revelation of this higher element in man is for the coming of the HOLY GHOST, Whose work it was to develop it.

suming a spiritual character, and virtues purely supernatural, such as faith, hope, Divine love, becoming ruling powers determining character. And thus, as His influence extends, and this higher element dominates the thoughts and affections, the whole being passes out of its natural stage, and becomes more and more entirely spiritual, as S. Paul describes the man who alone corresponding fully with the work of the HOLY GHOST, "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."¹ He is to himself a law, realising his true relation and superiority to the world of time and sense, living for eternity and in God. But though feeble at the best in our present state the development of the purely spiritual life, yet its consciousness of powers to be developed hereafter is ever advancing, and capacities at first unthought of or seemingly impossible become more and more realised, indicating a future without limit as to possible inward growth, and foreshowing a time when the spirit alone shall rule, and the soul and body become but as shadows of the real being, or at most but instruments and organs of the all ruling spirit, the soul and body alike putting on the incorruptible and the immortal, and alike glorious as a perfected "habitation of God through the SPIRIT." For this crowning glory, the only true form of the intended stature of man in CHRIST, the believer waits in patient hope; and its accomplishment is the last victory of our LORD in the great "Day of His appearing."

Blessed beyond all thought the joy of those who having lived with this aim, and having done and borne all, not counting possessions, earthly ease, or fame, O:

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 15.

even life dear in comparison with it, are at last presented to the FATHER in CHRIST, while the Spirit exults in His accomplished work, and the new kingdom is "delivered up to the FATHER, that God may be All in All."

X.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN THE BEATIFIC VISION.

WE have been considering the series of Revelations which God has mercifully vouchsafed to man in this our present life. We have seen how He has made known His Mind and His Will to His people; and then manifested Himself in the Flesh, and afterwards in the Spirit. There is a yet greater Revelation to come, for which we wait in faith, and which is the promised Bliss of His Elect. It is promised that we shall hereafter see God face to face, and live in His Presence for ever and ever.

Under certain conditions and limitations, in modes adapted to our present state, which though inadequate are real, we see God even now. There are two modes of vision by which we now see God. We see Him by faith, and we see Him "as in a glass." But faith is not an actual sight. And to see "as in a glass," is to see "darkly."¹ These two laws of vision fix the present boundary of the knowledge of God, beyond which no mortal man can pass. By faith we gaze on the full orb'd mystery, which inspired Seers, Prophets, and Apostles, learnt either by vision or by the illumination of the

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

rit, and expressed in words, to which martyrs and saints of all times have set to their seal that their witness is true. Leaning on such testimony we have entered into our souls through the Same Spirit the Catholic Faith, concerning, first, the FATHER, the primal source of Life; secondly, the Only-Begotten Son, Who has assumed for ever our Humanity: and thirdly, the HOLY GHOST abiding with us for ever—the Perfect Unity of the Threefold Personalities; and then, further, concerning the Sacramental Presence of our LORD through the Holy Spirit, the wondrous Fulness of Life ever flowing into His elect, as the effect of His Presence. The vision of which these form the great component parts, the fruit of the witness of ages resting on the unerring Word of God, grows on the mind as we gaze, and fills the impenetrable void through which the bodily eye and the natural reason look vainly,—fills it with forms of life, infinite, ineffable, before which the inner spirit bows and adores, while yet conscious of its utter inability to grasp or fashion them into palpable shape. And thus the impression of what we believe, but cannot see, sinks into the soul, as the soul rises to embrace the unimaginable and unimagined Truth, till Faith becomes as a second sight, as powerful in its influence on the will as the life, as though it were sight, but which is only after all what Holy Scripture beautifully and expressively describes, as “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”¹ The inner gaze and the apprehended vision form together a substantial realisation of what we trust hereafter to look upon, and of which for the present our inward convictions are the sufficient witness and the pledge.

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

176 *The Revelation of God in the Beatific Vision.*

The other mode of vision is "as in a glass," not through a glass, as by means of a telescope looking directly at an object, but according to ancient use before the telescope was known, in a mirror, seeing by reflection, not the image itself, but the image cast on the reflecting surface, the object itself being unseen. As in a lucid dewdrop we see the image of the sun; or as in the still clear lake we see the sky, the mountain, the passing cloud, as it were another world, while yet it is but the reflection of the world looking down upon the water, so in outward visible things and in our own inward consciousness, as a living mirror, we see God imaged before our mind's eye. In our own being, in intellectual powers, or moral attributes, or affections of heart; in our relation to other creatures, and the analogies of human conduct or experience; in the works of nature, and the laws of Providence; in the splendour of the visible heavens, or the endless forms of beauty and prolific exuberant life of the earth, or the chain-work of mighty forces encircling us ceaselessly in their majestic march everywhere, around, within, we see God manifesting Himself, and imaged before our eyes. We read His character in His works. These are the manifestations on which we gaze, as on a mirror, and see in the reflection the substance from which it is cast. For we ourselves and all creatures and all laws of being are cast off from the substantial Essence of God, as the simple exhibition of His will, taking their shape from the pressure of His all-ruling Mind, the ideas, the purposes, the desires of God thus expressing themselves. They cannot exist out of God, but only because of God and in God. Even in what man has marred, and in the consequences of man's sin, we see what theo-

logians have called God's secondary will, His Mind accommodating itself to the creature's will, His overruling evil for good. The evil is of the creature alone, but the course which the evil is forced to take, is still the determination of the Will of God, and speaks of God. Thus we see the Invisible reflected, the hidden Author and Sustainer of all imaged in the visible realisations of His Thought. We see Him "as in a glass," though "clouds and darkness are round about Him."

According to these two conditions or modes of apprehension we now see God, and thus only. But though shadowy and indirect, they are real apprehensions. They are educating us, that is, leading us on, and fitting us for the perfect Vision of the Future. They are real analogies and fitnesses, adapted to the intended end according to eternal laws, and effectually teaching what they image and express, so far as in our present condition of being we are able to understand. We do not see God "as He is," but as He is pleased to represent Himself to us, and as He knows we may best be prepared to know Him when He is revealed to us. And as we study these mirrored images of the Infinite and Eternal, in the certainty of their spiritual significance, we grow into the Realities which they represent; and when we shall wake up in another world to look on the Substance, or inner Life, of the transient imagery, we shall acknowledge the fitness of the representation, the truth of the resemblance. When we have found at last Him Whom we have been seeking, "if haply we could feel after Him and find Him," we shall know how suitable to our present state was His own present mode of intercourse with us, that we were indeed all the while most effectually communing

with God, learning to know God, though He speak only in parable, and veil Himself in symbol.

It is only in the future state of redeemed humanity that the final Revelation, the crowning glory of the mighty series of the Divine Revelations, shall be vouchsafed. Then only "that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect" shall come; then only will faith have fulfilled its work, and be translated into sight. Then shall we who now see "through a glass, darkly," see at last "face to face."¹ And this will be the Vision of bliss, the end to which all has tended, the Fulness of the purpose of Divine Love, the completed rest of the creature which as yet "groaneth and travaileth in pain together," the long sought Home of the pilgrim, of the banished, once "dead," now "alive again," once "lost," now "found," and for ever.

There are two instincts in our being which are as proofs inherent in our nature, of the great truth thus assured to us by Holy Scripture. We may not perhaps appeal to them as scientific demonstrations, but yet they are in fact stronger than any argument addressed to the reason, for as they are laws of consciousness universally acknowledged, they are traceable only to Him Who made us what we are, and in making us would not leave Himself, the Creator, without a witness.

One such instinct is that we are led directly from the contemplation of an event to desire to know its cause, from beholding any work to know whence it came, or how it was made. The mind instinctively passes from an effect to its cause. "Why is it?" "How comes it to be?" is the thought that at once springs up in the mind, and the higher the mental de—

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

velopment the more surely is it thus moved. It is this tendency which so often leads to scepticism, and restless daring questionings. But however much it may be abused through ill-regulated mental activity, it is in fact one of our noblest endowments, the prophetic intimation of our future greatness, the condition of our onward advance to perfect knowledge. It proves that by an inherent law of our original creation we are to be led upward from lower to higher causes, till we reach the very First Cause. God can make nothing without a purpose, without a view to a definite end. If He has so made us that the human mind,—and this the more strongly in proportion to its intellectual development,—cannot rest till it has discovered a cause for all it sees or knows, but having found it, feels an exquisite satisfaction in the discovery, what can it be but a significant assurance, that our nature is not intended to rest, or enter into its fulness, till rising upward along the chain of intermediate causes, it finds at last the highest links “bound by gold chains about the feet of God,” till by some knowledge, adequate to its cravings, it knows, it sees the Fountain Head of all existence, Light of Light, Life of Life?

The other instinct which is akin to the one just spoken of, and which co-operates with it, is that which makes us feel dissatisfaction with what is partial and imperfect, which constantly aspires to what is full and complete, and this too the more in proportion as our nature is elevated and refined. Our nature clings fondly to one object after another, only to be constantly disappointed. We paint each object to which we cling with colours cast off from our own imagination to add a fairer beauty and make it more pleasing.

We put away from our view any defect that mars our ideal, that our rest may be the more complete. Our first impulse is to exalt everything we love above its own reality. The love of art is akin to this instinct. It lives in the thought of finding the beautiful in nature, and then tries to make it more beautiful. Or it connects together isolated features of beauty, and seeks to form through their mutual relations a more perfect whole. If the mind breathes through the composition, and some moral or spiritual significance clothes itself in the outward forms, the pleasure it gives is the more intense. The substance and the symbol united speak to us through both the eye and the heart, filling us with an inexpressible delight. Our love ever tends to become an idolatry. If we cannot find in actual fact a beauty, an interest to satisfy our instinctive craving, we form it for ourselves in dreams, and clothe our picture with lineaments and colours of the most attractive kind, woven out of our own store of creative fancy, stimulated by the desire of the beautiful, the perfect, and grounded on the assurance of the existence somewhere of all possible perfections. And as soon as the mind grows dissatisfied with its own creation, or finds in some actual living object unexpected defects, the tendency is to pass from it to find elsewhere the object of its desire, ever longing for some lasting satisfaction to its power of conception; but again and again to be disappointed, self-deceived, till it learns the solemn truth, that the Perfect is yet to come, the Beautiful yet to be revealed, and so soaring upwards on the wings of an unsatiated and unsatiable desire, seeks to live by hope, and feed its longings by the sure promises of the Beatific Vision. The mere fact that an object is finite, tha

we can exhaust it, however faultless it may be humanly speaking, is to one who has learnt the secret of human desires enough to prove that he must pass beyond it if he would rest. For true humanity can only rest perfectly satisfied where there is nothing to mar the dream, nothing to disappoint the expectation, no possibility of exhausting the Fulness, where there is "no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning;" and where is this, but in God?

Every man is thus a Prophet to himself of the approaching Beatific Vision. His own nature perpetually rises up within him, and speaks of rest in God alone, of the need of soaring to the Highest, of beholding the all-perfect, the all-beautiful, the Infinite. To miss this aim, is to miss the true condition of our greatness, is in truth to fall, to commit again the original sin, to lose out of life its one only true attractive force, which, like the law of gravity, was intended to preserve every faculty of soul and spirit within its appointed sphere, and guide it along its intended course.

Yet when we speak of knowing and seeing God, it is not meant that any creature can thus apprehend Him in the sense in which we can apprehend created things, or mental conceptions. God is, as the Catholic Creed speaks, "incomprehensible;" He cannot be grasped. Created minds cannot take in His immensity, cannot see Him all round, cannot embrace Him. To do this man must be greater than God. Of everything created all may be known, because it must have its measure and its bound. But God alone can see Himself in this full meaning of the term, knowledge. God is necessarily conscious of Himself in His Perfectness, as we are conscious of our own being. But none but Him-

182 *The Revelation of God in the Beatific Vision.*

self can see Him thus. We see Him Who is Infinite finitely, because we are finite, and our powers of sight or knowledge cannot transcend what we are. Our power of knowledge is limited, because we are limited. God must ever abide in the eternal solitude of His absolute self-conscious Perfection, in "the Light to which no creature can approach."

But there are two modes of vision in which hereafter the promise is to be fulfilled to God's true elect, that they shall see and know Him. (1.) We shall see the Face, the Form of JESUS, in the lineaments and features of Whose glorified Humanity "the Fulness of the Godhead bodily" is expressed. The promise is that our "eyes shall see the King in His Beauty."¹ The "Beauty" of the King can be nothing less than the Light, the Mind of the eternal Godhead shining through the perfected glory of the Manhood. We shall see Him thus face to face, eye to eye; gazing we shall see and know that He is ours, and feel that He looks on us as His own. We shall become entranced and filled. Moreover so attractive, so penetrating, so wonderfully expressive will the Object be, that as we gaze we shall be transformed into His Likeness, all that is alien to it passing away from us, all that is akin developing to its utmost perfectness. The sight will not be by the mind or spirit only. At the Resurrection the disembodied spirit, if ever in its intermediate state wholly separate from a bodily vesture, will assume its recovered physical form after the fashion of CHRIST's "glorious Body," and in it will stand before Him; and the power of sight with which the spirit is endued, looking through the eye of the body, will be intensified, as in our present

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 17.

state what is visible to the eye is more keenly perceived, than what is merely discerned by the mind. The outward sense combining with the inward perception invests the vision with the utmost possible vividness, and draws out the fullest fervours of sensation. "In my flesh shall I see God,"¹ was the sustaining hope of Patriarchal life beyond the bounds of the elect race; and this prophetic consciousness brooding on the heart of man through the primeval ages, is met and answered by the inspired Word, that although "no man hath seen God at any time, the Only-Begotten Son Which is in the Bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared Him."² "Through the vail, which is His Flesh,"³ CHRIST glorified after a heavenly fashion will be for ever in Heaven the visible manifestation of God, the eternal Light of the Redeemed, even as the Sun is the material light and joy of this lower world. In the city where there is "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."⁴ And in seeing Him whatever more can be known of God will be known, and each soul will feel it has reached the term of its longings, as it sees before it the Vision of the Infinite and the All Perfect in lineaments and attributes kindred to its own.

(2.) But yet more than this is promised. We are taught to believe that we shall hereafter see the very Godhead in a way in which we cannot see Him now; not as now by faith, in the dark mirror, but by an actual intuition within the mind itself. For we are taught that "we shall know even as we are known," and therefore the Fulness of the promised Vision is not complete in the

¹ Job xix. 26.

² S. John i. 18.

³ Heb. x. 20.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 23.

184 *The Revelation of God in the Beatific Vision.*

glorious manifestation of our LORD, but waits for a yet further revealing of the Divine Nature, when, through His mediatorial power, "our LORD shall have delivered up the kingdom to GOD, even the FATHER, . . . and the SON Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in all."¹

There is in the Apocalypse a description of the Blessed, as possessed of a crowning glory in "having the FATHER's Name written in their foreheads."² There needs the extremest caution in drawing conclusions from such mystical metaphors, but they cannot but be intended to express great realities; and in a later chapter this promise is declared to be an express result of the Beatific Vision; "They shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads." A "name" in the Scriptural sense of the term, and indeed according to its simple original meaning, expresses the character of the Person it represents. It may therefore be concluded that the description implies a new and more intimate Revelation of the nature and character of the Godhead, not as an object to be comprehended, but as an impression stamped upon the consciousness as ideas are discerned within the mind. The Apocalyptic description accords with what Catholic tradition teaches, that the Beatific Vision will be not merely of God manifest in the Flesh, but of God Himself discerned in the Light of Glory, as the result of two special endowments which are reserved to be the crowning gift of Divine Love in the perfected condition of the Saints.

(1.) There will be given, as it is believed, in that Day to the spirits of the Blessed, when developed in their

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

² Rev. xiv. 1; xxi. 4.

fulness in union with their LORD, a higher power of consciousness, not as an increase of intellect or imagination, but as a superadded quality of grace shed from the Light of the Divine Essence, and suffused over the spirit, through which a perception such as cannot now be conceived will be possible of purely spiritual realities, and so in some measure of the Highest, the Holiest Spirit of all, the Eternal Deity. What was given to Moses in the Mount, enabling him to see the Light which left an abiding reflection on his countenance, an effluence of glory from what he beheld, which he must veil from carnal eyes—what Prophets and Seers possessed in the seasons of their ecstasies, enabling them calmly to look on heavenly things and forms of highest angels, and even of God Himself—what enabled S. Paul even in his mortal state, when caught up into “the third heaven,” to behold sights impossible to express in human language—such states of being are types of the new powers of perception which will be given to the Blessed, enabling them intuitively to behold spiritual essences, inner laws of highest Being, a luminous consciousness in which God will impress what of His Essence, His Nature, His Attributes, He may will to impart for the rest and perfect joy of His favoured creatures.

(2.) This interior luminousness of intuition, the light of glory enkindled within the spirit, will coalesce with the shining of the atmosphere of light which surrounds the Throne of God, what Holy Scripture specially distinguishes as the Glory of God, the Shekinah of His Presence in Heaven. As with the bodily eye, however perfect its mechanism, however clear, we cannot see unless the *surrounding atmosphere* is luminous, admitting the

innumerable pulses of light to penetrate, as they radiate from the surrounding objects and strike upon the retina, the condition of the atmosphere and the movement of the waves of light being exactly accommodated to the mechanism of the eye, so that if either be even in the least degree out of harmony with the other the power of sight would fail,—even so in heaven the Beatific Vision depends on a similar accommodation of the outward circumambient atmosphere to the inward organ of sight. In the Light of glory, the outward and the inward illumination, the responsive vibrations of the halo around the central Presence of God, and the eye of the enkindled entranced spirit, acting and reacting on each other, we shall behold and understand with increasing clearness the causes of all effects, the sources of living powers, the order of the government of the world, the principles of power and beauty, the solution of all mysteries, the reconciliation of now seemingly conflicting truths, the justification of all Divine dispensations, the outgoings of Wisdom and Love as they operate on higher levels within the innermost shrine, with all the wonders of the more glorious worlds now wholly invisible; and thus take our part among spiritual essences in the full exercise of our more transcendent attributes, even as now among the forces which determine the course of this lower world we have our portion and spheres of activity; but then in regions where no sin has entered or can enter in, “neither anything that defileth, nor whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.”¹ In this same Light with eyes similarly enkindled by the divine illumination, we shall also see all other beings, and others like ourselves, and all our own nearest and

¹ Rev. xxi. 27.

dearest who share the same inheritance, and all who shall follow us in the same track of ineffable light, all bound to each other and encircled by the embrace of Divine love, ever more and more, in the perfected fellowship of a blessed communion, as all are drawn nearer and nearer to the Lifegiving God, and become more absorbed in His Presence, more instinct with the fulness of His Life. And the consciousness that we ourselves too are seen and known and loved in the same light of glory, in the untroubled consciousness of purest, most trustful sympathy, shall intensify the bliss as we respond each to the other, in the filling up of the stature of CHRIST in union with God, thus multiplying joy, by its endless reflections, as on calm summer days the radiations of light reflecting their quivering pulses from object to object diffuse over lovely scenes of this lower earth a splendour and a brilliancy overflowing our hearts with an exquisite gladness, even to tears, in the thought that such brightness must pass away, but speaking as they fade to our longing gaze of the Light that will know no diminution or change.

It is of such joy that Isaiah prophesied afar off—though of necessity he embraced in his foreshortened vision the coming of the Messiah as the nearer glory, and the herald of the greater glory of which He was the cause—when, describing the infinite thrilling blessedness of the Saints of God, after he had seen “death swallowed up in victory, and the LORD GOD having wiped away tears from all faces,” he imagines their triumphant strain on the unveiling of the mystery in the light of Glory to their entranced spirits; “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the

188 *The Revelation of God in the Beatific Vision.*

LORD, we have waited for Him ; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”¹

It must be borne in mind that there are degrees in that glory and in the fulness of the Beatific Vision, as there are degrees in the capacities of the inner consciousness. For, however mysterious it is to think that time is the measure of eternity, that the present fixes and limits the everlasting, that the feeble rudimental beginnings of earthly saintliness form an unalterable standard after which eternal bliss takes its shape and proportions, yet it is an absolute truth revealed by God, that what we become in this our day of grace by an eternal law determines both the extent of our joy hereafter, and our capacity of enjoyment. The earnest of spiritual growth becomes thus the regulating principle of the future Divine illumination. According as we grow in knowledge and in obedience to the dictates of the Spirit in this brief Day of Faith, so each soul shall enter into its portion in the endless Day of Sight. There will be indeed to every one whose “name is in the Book of Life” a perpetual bliss, and each will be filled according to the full measure of his capacity for happiness, but bliss rises in greatness as the fitness and capacity for it expands ; and the joy of the LORD is shed forth in the greater richness as God yields out of His Fulness, according to His purpose, the richer fruit of love answering the more generous desires of love, the greater sweetness yielded to the stronger pressure of the more fervent zeal.

It is to be noted that when Holy Scripture reveals the fact of our being hereafter formed in the likeness

¹ Isa. xxv. 9.

of God, it speaks in one place of that likeness as a state already possessed on our entering the world of bliss, and again as the state in which we shall be perfected in the Beatific Vision. "When I awake up," says the Psalmist, "after Thy Likeness, I shall be satisfied with it,"¹ showing that this likeness will be possessed on the Day of the Resurrection, the opening scene of the wondrous future. And again the Apostle, looking to the after glory, the glorification which will follow after the Resurrection, says; "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,"² showing how the likeness will be the consequence of the last Vision of God. Both are surely true, however the apparent discrepancy may be reconciled. But is it not clear that the fact of the same condition marking the commencement equally as the close of our progress and the fullness of our reward, involves the momentous truth we have been considering, that the likeness formed in the present is the measure of the likeness to be attained in the future? The likeness in which we shall first stand up in the Day of Judgment, is indeed different in degree from the likeness which will be the result of the Vision of God, but the one is the complement of the other. The likeness now slowly forming its too marred features, through prayer and meditation, in self-discipline and voluntary humiliation, by effort and suffering, amid the struggles of our present life, is the outline which will be filled up and developed when we shall see God face to face, as the bud expands into the flower, the full beauty of the petals, nurtured secretly, but awaiting the warmth and shining in of the light to develope at last the richness of its hues and all its

¹ Ps. xvii. 16.

² 1 St. John iii. 2.

sweetness. The beauty and the joy of the Bride of CHRIST, who adorns herself in the day of her espousals, while she believes and yet has not seen, will put on an investiture of a superadded beauty, and a more radiant joy, at the "marriage supper of the Lamb," in the Day of the perfected union and restful embrace of Divine Love.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that in this present day of grace there should be continual growth, and a steadfastness of endeavour to please Him Who wills to test our faith as the one condition of all future expressions of bliss. There cannot as yet be perfect rest, or satisfying joy,—there must still be hindrances and troubles, as the sure heritage of a fallen state, and the burden of the flesh; and cravings doomed to disappointment must continue till all be chastened into patient waiting for what is reserved till the day of recompense, but all with the certainty that whenever the unveiling of the glory of the Living God breaks upon the soul, and the fulness of the mystery is revealed to the new-born sight, then the patience which shall have had its perfect work will not fail its sufficient reward.

Such a life of steadfast progress must depend mainly on the following facts being ever present to the mind.

Be assured, that by rightly using the means now at our command, be they more or less, yet known and determined by God as our appointed lot, we must needs ensure, as God is faithful Who has promised, the predestined end.

Be equally assured, that every struggle to maintain recollectedness, stillness of heart, evenness of temper, hiddenness of purpose, so as best to receive the impression of the Mind of God, will be rewarded with an in-

finite recompense, as grace produces its sure result, however little seen as yet, however marred by the clinging relics of former evil, and abiding infirmities, even the growing likeness of God.

Thirdly, preserve within the soul the sense of the necessity of effort in the fixed purpose to maintain resistance against any downward tendency, and the gradual effort to rise to higher principles, that we sink not altogether below the measure of our aspirations.

The fuller and the clearer the vision which faith embraces now in the quiet depths of the soul, the more it moulds the current of our life by the pressure exerted through meditative thought, and even so in the future, in the infinite and eternal world, will be our final and endless beatitude. So likewise will be the measure of joy each individual soul can give to its LORD, as each forms an acceptable addition to the Glory which will constitute His triumph in the Day when He shall deliver up His mediatorial kingdom, and the souls whom He hath won by His sufferings, to His FATHER. In the anticipation of the promised Bliss, His own as well as that of His Elect, in the Great Day, He ever speaks to each one, and says; "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still," righteousness increasing after the Fulness of His own; and "he that is holy, let him be holy still," holy unto the same excess wherewith He who has so loved us is Holy.

XI.

THE EFFECTS OF THE DIVINE REVELATIONS.

WE have gone through the series of successive Revelations, from the first development of life, to the closing manifestation of the Vision of God in Heaven. It only remains to add some remarks as to the objects which these Revelations were intended to serve.

It is not to be supposed that their effects were confined to mankind. On the contrary, we are expressly taught, that the great central verity of the Incarnation had a direct bearing upon all orders of intelligent creatures. S. Paul declares that "at the Name of JESUS every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"¹ and further, that not only would our LORD become an object of adoration as LORD of all created beings, but that the union of the different ranks of creatures in a common fellowship and their combination in some new and higher order of life, closer to God, depended on the fulfilment of this Mystery. "It pleased the FATHER that in Him, JESUS CHRIST, "should all Fulness dwell, and having made peace through the Blood of the Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether they be things

¹ Phil. ii. 10.

on earth, or things in heaven.”¹ And again, the same truth is repeated by the same Apostle, “that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, He might gather together in one all things in CHRIST, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him.”² To what extent the influence of the Incarnation was to reach, in what way the power of the Atonement affected the condition of other creatures, or what changes among them ensued through its means, is not revealed to us. Only we are guarded against encouraging any feeling of exclusiveness, any thought that we are so distinguished from other creatures, as to appropriate to ourselves the whole result of this most gracious condescension and love of God. We are taught to feel a common interest towards other creatures as intimately bound with us by a common relation to God. Our sympathies are enlarged and quickened. At the same time a distinctive prerogative must for ever attach to man, far above what any other creature can claim, because our nature alone has been taken into God. There is thus an election of man, within and above any other possible election, a glory which no other creature can ever share.

This vast superiority which distinguishes us, this crowning glory of our race, is indicated by S. Paul when he speaks of the design of God, “that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in CHRIST;”³ and again more expressly by S. James, in showing how God “begat us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.”⁴ While then the whole creation feels the in-

¹ Col. i. 20.

² Ephes. i. 9, 10.

³ Ephes. i. 12.

⁴ S. James i. 18.

fluence and shares the benefit of the Incarnation of God, man possesses the singular glory of a oneness of nature with CHRIST, an essential unity with Him Who is the Head and LORD of all creatures.

Of the effects of the Divine Revelations upon ourselves, enough has been already said in treating the several Revelations in their order. Only one further point in this respect needs to be insisted upon, that while each Revelation has its own distinctive influence in the formation of certain special graces in the soul, there is one general effect which all alike were equally intended to promote, namely, the overruling the human spirit, so as to transform it into a new state capable of responding to, and harmonising with, the revealed Will of God. The human spirit is the animating principle of the natural life, and takes different shapes and tendencies according to different individual propensities. From this spirit arise all the faults which mar the growth of grace in souls converted to God. It forms in fact the natural self in every one. It is the mind of the fallen creature alienated from God, and as sin has spread through the whole of our nature, so all that is of natural impulse or tendency is affected by its influence, and needs to be converted that it may live unto God. While each Revelation forms a fresh impression on the human spirit, a fresh seal stamping on it some new features of the Divine Character, they together tend to the same end of imparting a Divine spirituality, and restoring nature again to God. One proof of the vastness of the capacity of humanity is, that such a series of Divine Illuminations is brought to bear on the process of its restoration, as it is also a proof of the extent of the fallen con-

dition of the human spirit, that such a continued action of Divine interpositions has been needed to effect its restoration.

But there is a further object intended to be fulfilled through the influence of these Revelations, to which our attention should be directed, and one so important that it needs to be unfolded in detail. We are designed by Almighty God to be a medium of communication between Himself and the other creatures, a mirror in which they may read and study the higher operations of Divine Grace, and understand better the Character and Mind of God, as they see Him holding Personal communication with men, and giving Himself to man to be his new and eternal life.

It is an awful thought that Almighty God, dwelling in the stupendous Mystery of His unapproachable Majesty, perfect in power, and in the bliss of His Own infinite Perfections, looks down perpetually on us, who are but the creatures of His free Grace, the shadowy forms of His Divine Idea; that His Eyes everywhere discern the good in the midst of the evil, and delight to behold the representation of Himself, recognising a significance akin to Himself even in the least and feeblest among us, in characteristics which our fellow-creatures may pass by, and even scorn in their blindness. But it is far more wonderful to think that God should employ our race to be the medium through which He wills to make Himself known to the rest of His creatures, setting it to be "a spectacle to the world, and even to angels," not as S. Paul applies the idea, to add to the fearfulness of shame and suffering, but in order to exalt the greatness of our position in the scale of Creation, and to unite us with Himself the more

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closely, as His special instruments, a very Revelation of Himself, that He may be more perfectly known and magnified. We are assured that this result was to be accomplished through us, both in regard to the Church as a whole, and as to its individual members.

And first, in regard to the Church, we are taught that "what things" have been "ministered unto" us "the angels desire to look into,"¹ the word rendered "look into" representing a bent attitude as of one intently gazing and pondering on some object. More fully still we learn that one express purpose of the Revelations given to man, "of the Mystery which from the beginning of the world, has been hid in God, was to the intent, that now unto Principalities and Powers in Heavenly places might be known by," or through the instrumentality of, "the Church, the manifold Wisdom of God."² Myriads of creatures, higher in their intelligence and gifts of power than ourselves, are thus looking on, and watching whatever passes in the Church on earth, that they may learn a deeper knowledge of God, and a more complete idea of His purposes in regard to themselves. We have to view the Church therefore irrespectively of our own interests, as a marvellous system for embodying, not in word but in fact, the Divine Ideas, in itself an Apocalypse, not merely an organisation of living power for the personal beatitude of its members, but having an end wholly independent of and beyond this, to be a monument forever of the invisible and inscrutable designs of God, as affecting the whole Creation, and in which may be

¹ 1 S. Pet. i. 12. *Παρατίψαι*, to bend aside and stoop, and rivet the eyes down upon.—Wordsworth *in loco*.

² Ephes. iii. 9, 10.

read the handwriting of boundless mysteries of Wisdom and Love, hidden until this work of His grace was called into being.

Before the Incarnation this same purpose was in a measure fulfilled in the Church of Israel. To it were committed the Oracles of God, and the Tabernacle formed after the pattern of Heavenly things, shown to Moses in the Mount. It had its sainted Teachers, Prophets, and Seers, and others endued with special Gifts of Grace, heralds of the "fulness of time," like the loftier summits of a mountain range, touched by the rays of the sun before it has risen above the horizon, with a history replete with acts of faith, and zeal, as well as ever opening glimpses of a more glorious future. But this preparatory dispensation was incapable of satisfying the Angelic intelligences, who waited for the dawning of the perfect Light, in which they were to behold the manifestation of God Himself, and the effects to be accomplished by the full outpouring of His Spirit. It was reserved for the Church, formed by the indwelling of the HOLY GHOST, to exhibit the very fulness of the purpose and Love of God, and to reveal the means predestined from all Eternity for perfecting the Creation.

These results were to be exhibited as a whole in the Communion of the Saints, which is the Mystical Body of CHRIST, His Fulness, instinct with the One Spirit, acting in the world as not of the world. It accomplishes this end by perpetually expressing spiritual and heavenly realities, though in outward forms and relations, giving through its sacramental virtue a Divine significance to the least actions, and in the entire collective treasure of its graces, as they grow to perfec-

tion, manifesting forth the Character and Being of God, so far as He may be revealed to His creatures. In order to realise the full expressiveness of such a mode of manifestation, we must not limit our view of the Church of CHRIST to any particular age, nor to its earthly condition, but extend it to all time, and to the spiritual development of its glorified state, already attained by some more distinguished members of its body, and being gradually approached by the innumerable multitudes of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who will at last take their places around the Throne of God, in the Day of the Triumph of the Son of Man. The completed Body of the Elect will be the full-orbed mirror in which all intelligent creatures shall look to see the Fulness of the Manifestation of God in created life. "The Bride," "The Lamb's Wife," will be the perfect reflection of the life of JESUS, the full measure of the stature of CHRIST. They who have gone before "cannot without us be made perfect." We who follow after them are parts of the complement of the perfect Image, rays of the full Orb of Light. But as time unfolds its burden, and the members of the Mystical Body grow, the Angels, Principalities, and Powers read the ever-opening pages of the wondrous Book of Life, and learn the endlessly multifarious expressions of the inexhaustible Grace and Power of Divine Love. And therefore every age and every hour reveals more and more of the unfolding mystery. Each moment of passing time tells its tale, as the Church fulfils its mission of reflecting some fresh feature of the wonderful work of God.

The several portions of the Church's system bear their own distinctive witness before both human and

heavenly Intelligences. Thus the Catholic Creeds repeat from age to age the great leading facts of the life of God in the flesh, and the principles of the restoration of humanity through His perpetual Indwelling, expressing in human language the distinctness and mutual relations of the Divine Personalities, as they accommodate their Presence and their Powers to created life. Thus the Sacraments of the Church are continually exhibiting the mode of adapting the Invisible to the visible, of reconciling to material forms the highest operations of the Spirit, and even the Personal Presence of Almighty God, the communication of Himself and His most gracious Gifts, through the simplest external media, bringing into closest union uncreated and created life everywhere through the world. Thus again the Ritual of the Church, the symbolism of eternal things, extends to the earth the visible expression of the Worship of the Heavens, exhibiting the inner harmonies of faith and love, connecting the acts of Adoration offered in heaven above with the ministries on earth before the Same Presence hidden beneath consecrated veils.

Again, similar results are attained through the employment of human agencies, chiefly in the Priesthood, as it continually sets forth by act and significant sign the effects of the atoning Sacrifice, and the boundless applications of Divine Benedictions, and of the whole Mystery of Redemption at work in the ingathering of souls, and the sanctification of the unholy, exhibiting all the creative and remedial powers of Grace in active operation under infinitely varied forms. Thus too in family life, in the natural order, the Fatherhood of God, and the Sonship of the Only Begotten of the FATHER

are shadowed forth in human relationships, and the Unity of the Divine Persons is represented in the sameness of human nature, so closely uniting together distinct human personalities, while the Marriage bond, the root and head of all family relationship, formed through the knitting together of fondest and tenderest affections, represents the Mystical Union that is betwixt CHRIST and His Church, and the bringing forth of children to God in the regeneration to Eternal Life. Thus again, the more distinctive features of the Life of JESUS are shown in the life of Religious Communities, their members being united by purely spiritual ties, and subjecting all earthly relationships and desires to the one dominant aim of the higher union of Eternal Love, and of perpetual self-sacrifice, thus raising all earthly life through acts and vows of self-dedication to the active imitation of the state in which JESUS willed to fulfil His course in the flesh.

But it is not merely in the Church, as a Body, or in its ministries, or the collective vocations of its members, that the inner truths of the Character and Work of God are set forth, and the Divine Idea reflected, but individual souls within the Church, partaking of its mysterious life, have each their own separate responsibility, and may give their own separate witness for God before the world and before angels. Each separate soul is a complete unity in itself, has its own world of being, and is gifted with grace to become the mirror of the Mind of God, a luminous substance for the reflection of His Attributes. In all willing hearts there exists this revealing power. Each is intended to bear His Image and Superscription, and whether consciously or not, if

true to the callings of God, each becomes more and more a manifestation of Himself. For all true life is a complete whole, though its several parts and features can only gradually develop themselves. Our regeneration contains the seed of our future development. Where the true "unction of the Holy One" is, there it follows, "Ye know all things." The promise is, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."¹ And as with Divine Knowledge, so with the life of grace, it exists in all, if not as yet in habit and in act, yet in potential virtue. Each faithful soul that truly responds to the call of God is, so to speak, an epitome of the revealed Life of God; having a secret hidden reserve of power to be developed in time, all the future expansiveness of grace wrapped up in the first complete Gift of the Spirit, as the bud contains the folded petals which wait for their expansion as the virtues of the plant grow under the influence of the warmth and light. Each grace is the reflection, the counterpart of a Divine Attribute, and the collective growth is a revealing of God to eyes which intently look to learn in its development more and more of His secret Being.

It is thus that the witness of CHRIST is perpetuated on earth, extended from age to age, as S. Paul shows in the particular case of suffering then laid on him, the call to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh, for His Body's sake, which is the Church,"² each pang of our sensitive frames, each sore humiliation or agony of spirit, if

¹ Jer. xxxi. 34.

² Col. i. 24.

truly borne for His sake, being the continuation of His Passion, transmitted on from age to age, the successive waves of the troubled sea of His obedience unto death, the travail of our New Birth into Eternal Life. And this principle, which is the true explanation of the mystery of sorrow and trial borne by the Faithful, is equally applicable to all manifestations of the Divine Life, all sacrifices, all labours, all acts of devotion, all accomplished vocations,—they are in the same manner the perpetuation of the life and work of CHRIST, a “filling up” of the full measure of the manifestation of the Godhead, the entire development of the Revelations in which the Angelic hosts learn “the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the Love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge.”

And while the collective graces and acts of the several individuals of the whole Mystical Body thus form the combined whole, yet as in lovely scenes of natural beauty each feature has its own particular charm, not even the least being overlooked in the general effect, and the eye loves to rest now on one, now on another object, gathering delight from each separate form or hue of beauty, and we feel that nothing could be spared without loss to the beholder; so in the world of grace, each, even the feeblest expression of faithful correspondence with God, has its distinctive value in His sight, as a separate manifestation of Himself, no act of love overlooked, no effort of a good will disregarded. Even the simplest expression of spiritual carefulness may be thus exalted as a precious reflection of Almighty God,—forbearance with others’ faults shadowing forth His longsuffering; evenness of temper His Eternal Peace;

regularity and punctual observance of rule His Order in the government of the world ; gentleness of manner His Loving-kindness ; thoughtfulness of care His unwearied Providence. And in the same manner the Life of JESUS is ever being reproduced in His Elect. All His miracles of Mercy, all His extremities of shame, all His Sacrifices of Love, all His words of tenderness, are being perpetuated from age to age ; and every endeavour to imitate the spirit of His Life, however imperfect, is still accepted as a representation of Himself, to teach, to illustrate the Mind of CHRIST to the world, and to angels : each act of submission to oppression, or contempt, representing His Passion, each acceptance of the lowliest place His Humility, each yielding of the will His perfect Obedience, each sacrifice of one's own ease or pleasure His Redeeming Oblation of Himself, each conquest of sensual desire His Victory in the Temptation, each form of aid to others His compassionate Love.

Thus the Manifestation of God extends itself among the creatures. Thus the Life of CHRIST is for ever present, perpetuated in His Elect. Every Grace viewed quite apart from its blessedness to each individual soul in whom it is being perfected, is as a vision of the Light, a revealing of God, part of a system of life endlessly reflecting in all directions the ceaseless outflowings of the Heart of God.

There remain but a few remarks to be added.

Consider what the sin must be, if instead of the reflected Image of God, which it is our highest office to express, there be found in us a manifestation of evil, a wilful addition to the ever accumulating sin of the

world, a fresh sign of the admitted power of the enemy of God, triumphing in God's fairest creation. It is so, that either the Likeness of God, or the likeness of Satan, is forming in us. Even if there be no malice or direct enmity, if our spirit be only of the earth, earthy, and without positive sin, yet it is a fallen state, in which the Tempter is gradually establishing his reign, and forming his image, and manifesting his power. It is an absolute truth that where the Light of God is not shining, all is still in darkness. The fallen Adam begat children "in his own likeness, after his image," no longer as himself had been formed, in "the Image and Likeness of God." The awful question must ever press on each one of us, "What is going forth from me? what am I tending to promote? what am I revealing? is it of God, or of Satan, or of the world? Or, if the image of the Evil One was once reflected in me, is it being constantly overcome—by tears of penitence, by strivings after purity, by prayer, by quick and ever more earnest returning into God? Or, if the Image of my God is being more and more manifested in me, am I increasingly careful that His restored Likeness should not be marred or ruffled?" The reflection of the Image of God may be quickly disturbed, if not lost wholly. Even in the more faithful gloom or disorder of spirit, inequality of temper, the allowance of natural interests or the human spirit to rise up, suffusing the whole soul with low and earthly influences, unrestrained desires, or jealousies, or vanities, may apparently at least destroy the Likeness. The embosomed mountain lake in which we have delighted to watch the extreme beauty of the reflection

of the sky, the rocks, the trees, the flowers, the very blades of grass upon the bank, may suddenly change,—a slight breeze has ruffled the surface of the lovely scene, and its unearthly peace is no more, or may even be transformed into a rough and angry deep of stormy waters. Such rapidity of change which often passes over the face of nature, may equally prevail in the state of the soul. We may have meditated long, been in a very rapture of contemplation, the spirit suffused with the Light of the Glory shed forth from the Spirit of God, in perfect stillness, and the ineffable Love of God be to us in that precious season of intimate communion clear as the daylight to the bodily sense, but in a moment the earthly mist may overcloud the vision of the soul or perhaps even the storm of passion may arise, and only in tears of shame, and in the lowliness of the confession of grievous infirmity, can we recover our peace, and enter again into rest.

Consider further what our sin is towards others, if our example disedifies them, if we fail to reflect the power of the higher nature which was given to us partly that it might attract and strengthen them. What loss of honour to God! What a breach of charity! What rewards for faithfulness to God's purposes for us forfeited! In manifold ways far beyond what we conceive, one soul touches another, and influences another's destiny. It is part of the law of Grace that it acts through intermediate agencies, the more to bind the elect in one common fellowship, and promote the law of love. It is with the spiritual as with the material world. The splendour of outward nature is not from the light of the sun alone, but from its infinite

reflections cast on every feature of the scene, through innumerable radiations. The multiplication of the illuminated objects, acting and reacting on each other, causes the visible glory of the material world. Thus the manifestation of the powers of Grace, and of the Light of the Spirit of God, which moves and attracts the soul towards God, is caused not by the direct influence of the HOLY SPIRIT alone, but by innumerable indirect influences endlessly diversified, which owning Him indeed as their prolific Source, yet pass through others, His attractions being diffused among the creatures through the example, the energy, the faithfulness of His agents, and His ministers, Himself often unappreciated and unknown. What a ground then for bitter remorse, to find that we have failed God in this high calling,—if instead of helping, we have hindered others, instead of drawing them on, we have kept them from God, instead of contributing to extend His love and the knowledge of Him, we have been, whether consciously or unconsciously, the means of deepening influences alien and hateful to Him!

As it is the highest purpose of the Church, to manifest forth the Glory of God, so it is the highest purpose of the vocation of individual souls to reflect His Likeness. And what will be our joy in the Great Day of our LORD, when we shall stand face to face before Him, to feel that in that vast company of the Redeemed, who will be with us in His Glory, there are those present who owe to the influence we have exercised, the example we have set, the efforts we have made, their share in that boundless, endless bliss!

For this let us strive ; for this devote ourselves. So may our sanctification have been no selfish work, our love a free and generous self-oblation, our future bliss be multiplied by the consciousness of having embraced in our common hope those whom God had given us to be our crown of rejoicing for ever and ever in His boundless Joy.

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